JEAN-CLAUDE FOREST

BARBARELLA

BOOK 2: THE WRATH OF THE MINUTE-EATER

ADAPTED BY KELLY SUE DECONNICK

HUMANOIDS

JEAN-CLAUDE FOREST

BARBARELLA

AND THE WRATH OF THE MINUTE-EATER

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BARBARELLA and THE WRATH OF THE MINUTE-EATER.
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THE WRATH OF THE MINUTE-EATER

BARBARELLA! CAN YOU TELL YOUR PUBLIC WHERE YOU GOT THE IDEA FOR THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM?
I JUST KNEW YOU CRAZY PEOPLE WOULD BE UP FOR ANYTHING...
THEY SAY YOU'VE BOOKED THE SEXIEST AND MOST DANGEROUS ACTS IN THE GALAXY. CARE TO COMMENT?
WELL, WE DO HAVE THE LOVE DANCE OF THE MEHANDRE AND A COUPLE OF RAGOUTIS SET UP BEHIND A THIRTY FOOT TALL MAGNIFYING GLASS, BUT I ASSURE YOU - AS LONG AS THE SHARPSHOOTERS REMAIN IN PLACE, THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR.
WHAT'S NEXT FOR BARBARELLA? ARE YOU RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS?
STAR PRESS
ARE YOU KIDDING? RIGHT THIS VERY MINUTE I'M PREPARING SOMETHING UNIMAGINABLE - STAY TUNED!
SAY, BILL! I NEED AN IDEA THAT'S UNIMAGINABLE. WHAT'VE YOU GOT?
OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD: YOU AND I GO FULL THROTTLE TO ALPHA CENTAURI AND OUR CHILDREN DON'T RETURN UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT ATOMIC WAR.
BARBARELL
'TIMEC HAS AN IDEA, BARBARELLA.
PFFT! IF ALL SHE NEEDED WAS A LAME MARTIAN JOKE--
LET HIM TALK, BILL. YOU NEVER KNOW...
1

HE COMES FROM CISTERN IV. HE'S GOT GILLS!
AN ADRIOPE? A SALVATORIAN?
...AN AQUAMAN!
I THOUGHT THEY NEVER LEFT THEIR PLANET!
THIS ONE ISN'T LIKE THE OTHERS! HE TRAVELS.
GOOD EVENING.
THEY CALL ME NARVAL. I'D INVITE YOU IN, BUT THE WATER IS PARTICULARLY CHILLY THIS EVENING.
THEN I'LL STAY HERE, WHERE IT'S WARM AND DRY. 'TIMEC SAYS YOU HAVE AN ACT ...?
OH MY, YES. I DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY FOR NOTHING.
KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE OTHER TANK THERE.
2

IMPRESSIVE! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT TECHNOLOGY EXISTED!
IT DIDN'T – UNTIL NOW. AQUAMEN HAVE DIFFICULTY MOVING THROUGH AIR, SO *TELEPORTATION* HAS BEEN AN ANCIENT OBSESSION FOR MY PEOPLE. I WAS JUST LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE THE ONE WHO FIGURED IT OUT.
DID YOU TRAVEL ALL THE WAY HERE IN THIS THING?
NOOO, THE TRIC TRAC TRANSFER IS STILL ONLY GOOD TO A COUPLE HUNDRED METERS. I HAD TO FLY IN AN ASTRONEF TANKER. BIT OF AN ORDEAL. HIGH RISK OF AIR EXPOSURE – THAT'S A *TERRIFYING* THING FOR AN AQUAMAN.
DOES HE KNOW THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM *ALREADY* HAS A RED WHALE AND 25 SEA LIONS FROM VENUS?
MR. NARVAL, COULD YOU REPEAT YOUR DEMONSTRATION FOR BILL HERE?
I'LL DO BETTER THAN THAT! SIR, IF YOU WOULD POSITION YOURSELF IN FRONT OF THAT SCREEN THERE...
PERFECT. RELAX... TAKE A DEEP BREATH...
YES... AND?
BILL? WHAT'RE YOU DOING IN THERE?!
3

SHAME ON YOU! LUCKY HE KNOWS HOW TO SWIM!
THAT WASN'T FUNNY! BUT IT WAS IMPRESSIVE. ...YOU'RE HIRED.
OH DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE TAKING THAT CLOWN SERIOUSLY?! IT'S A MAGIC TRICK! AND IT'S NOT EVEN THAT IMPRESSIVE.
NARVAL IS HIDING SOMETHING. THERE'S NO WAY HE TRAVELED FOUR LIGHT YEARS JUST TO JOIN A CIRCUS!
A WEEK OR TWO LATER...
THE AQUAMAN'S A WEIRD ONE... HE ASKED US TO SET UP AN AQUARIUM FOR HIM IN THE STABLES.
HE'S A PHONEY AND HIS ACT IS A PHONEY! GET RID OF HIM!
HE SPENDS ALL HIS FREE TIME FEEDING THAT GIANT CARNIVOROUS EAR...
LISTEN, NARVAL, I LIKE YOU, BUT YOURS IS NOT EXACTLY A SCINTILLATING ACT. IF YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER AGENDA HERE, LET'S HAVE IT. YOU WANT TO TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE TRIC TRAC TRANSFER, MAYBE...?
BARBARELLA... THE T.T.T. ISN'T JUST A DEVICE TO MOVE ONE THROUGH SPACE. IT ALSO ENABLES ONE TO PASS THROUGH TIME.
IT'S NOT A TIME MACHINE EXACTLY, BUT IT, UH... HOW DO I PUT THIS? IT BYPASSES THE TEMPORAL DISCONTINUITY THAT REIGNS WITHIN THE VERY HEART OF THE GALAXY!
YOU MEAN THE OBSCURE WORLDS – THE HOLES IN THE SKY? THE ONES THAT SUPPOSEDLY EVOLVED IN ANOTHER SPACE-TIME.
YES. WITH A COUPLE OF TRIC TRAC TRANSFERS, A SHIP COULD THEORETICALLY BE ABLE TO FIND AND EXPLORE THOSE WORLDS.
4

ALL RIGHT, HANDSOME, DON'T WASTE YOUR BUBBLES. IF THE T.T.T. PLANS WERE FOR SALE, YOU COULD NAME YOUR PRICE... SO IT'S NOT THAT, IS IT? THERE'S SOMETHING *MORE*, SOMETHING DRAWING YOU TO ONE OF THESE MYSTERIOUS WORLDS... SPINNING STONES, OR ARCHLANE DRUPES OR SOMETHING... WHATEVER IT IS, YOU WANT TO LAUNCH AN EXPEDITION TO FIND IT! YOU NEED A BIT OF GOLD, SURE, BUT YOU ALSO NEED A COUPLE OF FOOLS CRAZY ENOUGH TO GO WITH YOU.
I'D SETTLE FOR JUST *ONE* FOOL...
OH, NARVAL! JUST AS I WAS STARTING TO GET BORED!
ON THE ROAD?! ARE YOU *INSANE*? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE *LAST TIME*? AND THAT WAS *BEFORE* THE SHOW GOT *STALE*...
IT'LL BE *DIFFERENT* THIS TIME, BILL. YOU'RE RIGHT, WE *HAVE* GOTTEN STALE! THE PROGRAM HASN'T CHANGED IN FOUR MONTHS. PEOPLE ARE LOSING INTEREST...
CAN YOU BLAME THEM? WE USED TO HAVE THE MOST EXOTIC MENAGERIE IN THE ENTIRE SOLAR SYSTEM! NOW THE ONES THAT WE HAVEN'T ALREADY LOST TO DISEASES ARE BARELY HOLDING ON...
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING OR DISBAND! AND I'D SURE PREFER TO *DO SOMETHING!* SOMETHING LIKE *SCOUR THE SOLAR SYSTEM* FOR NEW ACTS.
THAT INFURIATING FISH MAN IS BEHIND THIS, BUT SHE'LL NEVER ADMIT IT...
PACK YOUR BAGS AND GRAB YOUR TOOTHBRUSHES, MY FRIENDS! *THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM IS GOING ON TOUR!*
BACKWATER PLANETS, HERE WE COME!
THANKS TO OUR FRIEND NARVAL, THIS ASTRONEF IS EQUIPPED WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY DEVICE THAT WILL ENABLE US TO REACH THE FAR CORNERS OF SPACE AND TIME WHERE PEOPLE ARE *DYING* TO SEE OUR SHOW!
UNBELIEVABLE!
THE FULL SHOW? EVEN THE *FORBIDDEN* NUMBERS?
ALL OR NOTHING!
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BARBARELLA, MY DEAR, CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN TO ME THIS SUDDEN CHANGE? YOU WEREN'T STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, BY ANY CHANCE?
BILL, BILL, BILL... I'M AFRAID I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. IT DID FEEL ELECTRIC! MAYBE I WAS LOVESTRUCK? MY FEET WERE WET AND MY HEART HIT CRITICAL MASS...!
BIG BUG
...BUT I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF I'M NOT HIS ONLY LOVER...
FOR THE FIFTIETH TIME, WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANTED? WERE YOU ASHAMED OF YOUR WET DREAMS? ANSWER ME, FREAK!
I'M NOT ASHAMED. I ADMIT IT! THE THING I WANTED MOST FROM THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM, WAS TO GET CLOSE TO THE GIANT CARNIVOROUS EAR...
BRING OUT THE GIANT EAR!
BUT~! IT'S TIME FOR IT TO EAT!
THEN LET IT EAT BEFORE US!
OKAY!
NO! YOU'RE GOING TO RUIN ITS APPETITE! IT'S USED TO EATING IN THE DARK. YOU'LL MAKE IT SICK!
I'VE NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY WE HAVE THIS ABOMINATION ON ABOARD ANYWAY...
IT'S SOME SORT OF SUPER RADIO-TELESCOPE. IT CAN DETECT THE DISTANT SOUNDS OF OBSCURE WORLDS WHERE OUR INSTRUMENTS CAN'T.

ONCE IT'S EATEN, IT'LL NOD OFF LISTENING TO THE STARS... BILL, PREPARE TO APPLY THE RECEIVERS!
WHY ME?! IT DOESN'T LIKE ME.

WHAT'S IT SAYING?
THE SAME AS BEFORE. THE CLOSEST OBSCURE PLANET IS THE ONE WE CALL SPECTRA. AND WE WON'T GET THERE FOR ANOTHER THREE MONTHS.

THREE MONTHS!
INDEED! WE'RE ONLY TRAVELING AT FOUR TIMES THE SPEED OF LIGHT.
SO YOU'RE SAYING THIS ASTRONEF IS A CLUNKER!

NOT AT ALL! JUST THAT SPECTRA IS VERY FAR AWAY...
THREE MONTHS!

WHATEVER WILL WE DO TO PASS THE TIME...?

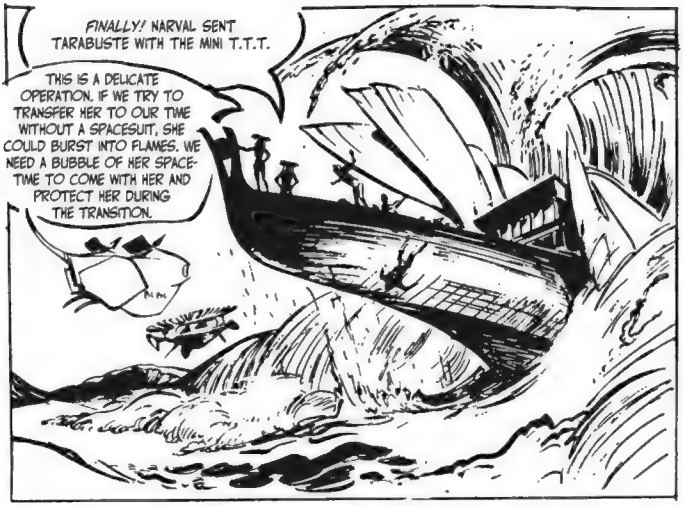
THREE MONTHS LATER...
SPECTRA IN SIGHT!
OH! UH... PARDON ME!

NARVAL, LOOK! HE'S RIGHT! WE CAN MAKE OUT SOMETHING... BUT...WHY DOES IT LOOK SO... FUZZY?
I TOLD YOU. IT OBSERVES TIME MORE SLOWLY THAN WE DO. THE PHOTONS THAT PASS FROM ITS TIME INTO OURS LEAVE DARK INTERVALS A THOUSAND TIMES LONGER THAN NORMAL BETWEEN THEM. VISUALLY, THIS MANIFESTS FOR US AS A KIND OF SEMI-OBSCURITY.
DINO BUO

AND IT'S RAINING ON SPECTRA. EVEN IF WE AVOID THE CLOUDS, THERE'S NO WAY TO PASS THROUGH THAT RAIN. THE DROPS ARE HARD AS ROCKS!
THERE'S GOT TO BE A SUNNY SPOT – FIND IT!
THERE! IT WORKED!
BIG BUG
THE CLOUDS, THE RAIN, THE OCEAN... THEY ALL LOOK FROZEN. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE WERE CAUGHT IN SPECTRA'S TIME?
THE SLOWING DOWN OF OUR MOLECULES WOULD INSTANTLY TRANSFORM US INTO BLOCKS OF ICE... I WOULD BE PARTICULARLY RIDICULOUS IN THAT STATE.
ANYONE ELSE COLD ALL OF A SUDDEN?
IT'S ALL RIGHT. THE STABILIUM RAILINGS ON TOP OF THE SHIP CREATE AN INVISIBLE BUBBLE SO WE CAN REMAIN IN OUR OWN TIME.
NOT ONE PATCH OF DRY LAND ON THE HORIZON! BARBARELLA, WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN US INTO? THIS IS TERRIFYING!
NARVAL, LOOK OUT THE PORTHOLE! THAT SHIP'S IN DISTRESS!
I SEE IT. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO?
AT THIS RATE, IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST TWO MORE HOURS FOR THAT WAVE TO SWALLOW THEIR SHIP!
FORGET

THEN WE'VE GOT TWO HOURS TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO SAVE THEM. IF WE DO NOTHING, THEY'RE DOOMED!
WE COULD USE THE T.T.T. AND BRING THEM INTO OUR BUBBLE!
THAT'S ABSURD. WE CAN'T GO INTERVENING LIKE THAT!
WELL, NARVAL, SINCE YOU HAVE NO SOUL, I GUESS BILL WILL COME WITH ME!
FINE! CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND YOU, THE TEMPERATURE OUT THERE IS REACHING ZERO CRONAX!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I EVER LOVED THAT CALLOUS CREEP!
FINALLY! YOU'RE BEGINNING TO SEE YOUR PRINCE CHARMING FOR WHAT HE REALLY IS.
OF COURSE, NOT UNTIL AFTER HE STEALS YOUR SHIP AND DRAGS US OUT TO THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE, BUT...
ENOUGH!
LOOK AT THEM... THEY'RE LIKE STATUES...
HMM. ARE YOU SURE THEY CAN'T SEE US?

SHALL WE POKE AROUND A BIT? CHECK OUT THE SHIP'S HOLD?
I DON'T SEE WHY NOT.
HEY! THE FIRST MAN THAT I'VE TOUCHED ON THIS PLANET! I SHOULD MAKE A WISH...
IF ALL OF THIS WERE TO SUDDENLY SPRING INTO MOTION, WOULD I BE CRUSHED, THEN DROWNED? OR DROWNED, *THEN* CRUSHED?
NARVAL, IT'S BARBARELLA. CAN YOU HEAR ME? WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO SAVE ONE OF THESE PEOPLE AND WE NEED YOUR HELP. REFUSE, AND I *SWEAR* I'LL LEAVE YOU AND YOUR CARP BOTH HERE TO *STARVE!*
SHE'S NOT A *CARP!* SHE'S A WONDERFISH FROM ANTIBEL! A SEXY, SEXY WONDERFISH.
THAT'S IT! CUT HIM OFF FROM PLANKTON AND LET HIM GOBBLE UP HIS *SEXY FISH!*
NARVAL, I'M SERIOUS. AN AQUARIUM EXISTS IN A FRAGILE EQUILIBRIUM... YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT ACCIDENT...
WHO DO YOU WANT TO SAVE?
A GIRL. A GIRL WHO FANCIES LITTLE PAINTINGS...


FINALLY! NARVAL SENT TARABUSTE WITH THE MINI T.T.T.
THIS IS A DELICATE OPERATION. IF WE TRY TO TRANSFER HER TO OUR TIME WITHOUT A SPACESUIT, SHE COULD BURST INTO FLAMES. WE NEED A BUBBLE OF HER SPACE-TIME TO COME WITH HER AND PROTECT HER DURING THE TRANSITION.

HOW FAR DO YOU THINK WE ARE FROM HER?
TWO, TWO AND A HALF METERS, MAYBE? CAN YOU HURRY? SHE'S MOVING A BIT AND I'M AFRAID SHE'LL KNOCK HERSELF OUT WHEN SHE HITS THE FLOOR.

I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT! IF THE TRANSFER WORKS, SHE'LL FINISH THE MOVEMENT SHE STARTED IN HER TIME IN OURS!
WE'LL HAVE TO BREAK HER FALL!

FORGET IT, TARABUSTE! THESE LINENS ARE ABOUT AS SOFT AS CAST IRON.
BILL! JUST... JUST GET IN FRONT OF THE GIRL AND TRY TO CATCH HER!

READY?
GO!

AAAH!

SHE'S CRYING LIKE A BABY!
HURRY, TARABUSTE, THE SPACESUIT!

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* TO HER? WHAT IS ALL THIS?
WE'RE TEACHING HER OUR LANGUAGE...
THE FREUD AND COMBALUZIER SYSTEM IS BASED ON THE SEXUAL DATA OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THE LIBIDO ACTS AS A FRAMEWORK UPON WHICH WE DEVELOP CONCEPTS AND CORRESPONDING WORDS. IN AN HOUR, SHE'LL SPEAK GALACTIC ESPERANTO BETTER THAN YOU OR I!
WHAT ABOUT HER DEVELOPMENT? DON'T YOU RISK LEAVING HOLES IN HER MEMORY?
THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED. IF NEED BE, WE'LL SIMPLY SURPRISE HER WITH A REFRESHER!
THE GIRL IS SAVED! AND YOU'RE STILL NOT HAPPY. WHY ARE YOU SUCH A GRUMP, NARVAL?
I'M NOT *UNHAPPY*, BARBARELLA, BUT I CAME TO SPECTRA FOR A *REASON*. I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR DISTRACTIONS.
AND WHY *DID YOU* COME HERE? TELL ME.
BARBARELLA, IF YOU COULD LIVE IN AN AQUARIUM, WOULD YOU?
NO... I SUPPOSE IT COULD FUN FOR A BIT, BUT I'D GET BORED AFTER A WHILE.
LEGEND HAS IT SPECTRA POSSESSES A *MUTATION STONE*...
A *MUTATION STONE*?
YES. A STONE THAT ALLOWS LIVING BEINGS TO CHANGE THEIR NATURE AND THEIR FORM...
BARBARELLA, WITH THAT STONE I COULD LIVE LIKE A *HUMAN*, IN THE OPEN AIR!
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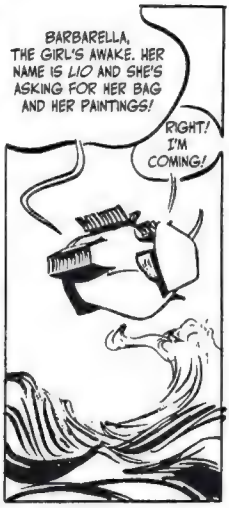
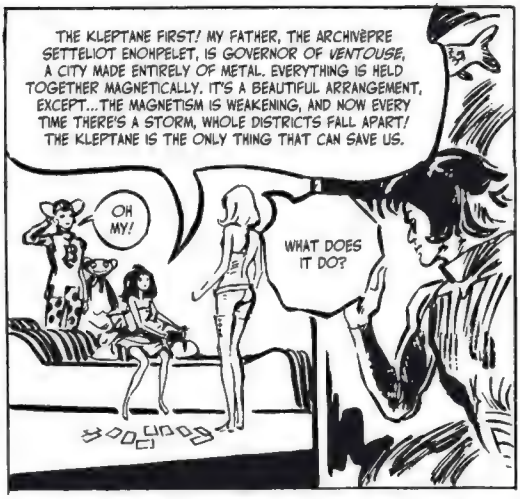
THAT'S WHAT YOU CAME HERE FOR? TO FREE YOURSELF FROM THIS GLASS CAGE? OH, NARVAL...
OH, BARBARELLA... TELL ME WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FEEL THE WIND THROUGH YOUR HAIR, TO SMELL ROSES... AND LILACS!

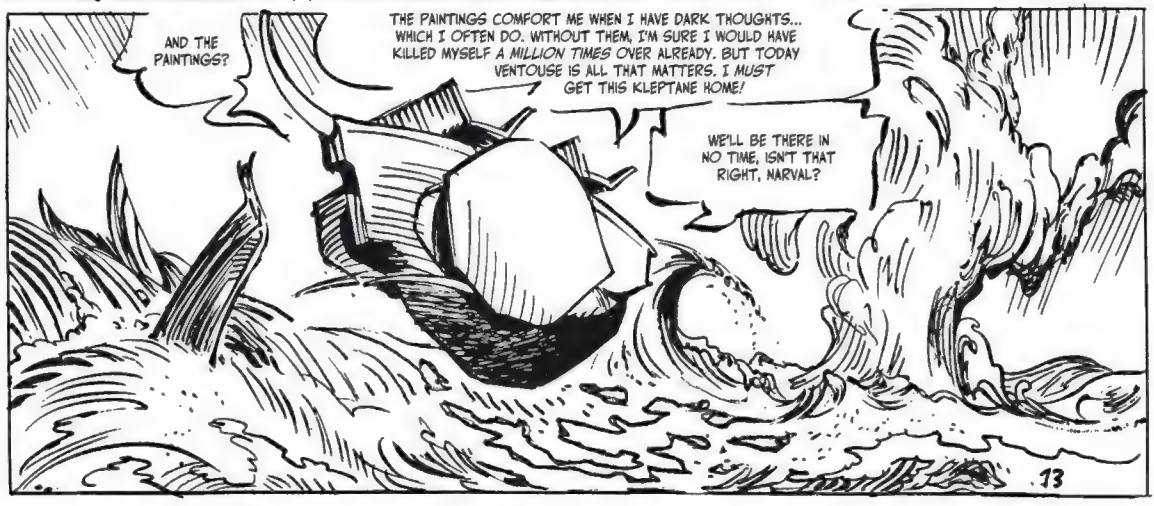

BARBARELLA, THE GIRL'S AWAKE. HER NAME IS LIO AND SHE'S ASKING FOR HER BAG AND HER PAINTINGS!
RIGHT! I'M COMING!

HELLO THERE.
I'M... SO TIRED... WHERE ARE MY PAINTINGS? WHO HAS MY BAG?
VOILÀ!

I'D DIE WITHOUT MY PAINTINGS. AND THE GRAM OF KLEPTANE MY CITY NEEDS HAD BETTER BE IN MY BAG!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


THE KLEPTANE FIRST! MY FATHER, THE ARCHIVÊPRE SETTELIOT ENOHPELET, IS GOVERNOR OF VENTOUSE, A CITY MADE ENTIRELY OF METAL. EVERYTHING IS HELD TOGETHER MAGNETICALLY. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL ARRANGEMENT, EXCEPT...THE MAGNETISM IS WEAKENING, AND NOW EVERY TIME THERE'S A STORM, WHOLE DISTRICTS FALL APART! THE KLEPTANE IS THE ONLY THING THAT CAN SAVE US.
OH MY!
WHAT DOES IT DO?

MY FATHER SAYS IT RECHARGES THE MAGNETISM APPARATUS. I'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO BRING IT BACK FROM THE DRY COUNTRY BECAUSE A YOUNG LADY IS LESS LIKELY TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF KLEPTANE THIEVES THAN A YELLOW STRIPE SPECIALIST OR A COP.
I SEE.
MAKES SENSE!


AND THE PAINTINGS?
THE PAINTINGS COMFORT ME WHEN I HAVE DARK THOUGHTS... WHICH I OFTEN DO. WITHOUT THEM, I'M SURE I WOULD HAVE KILLED MYSELF A MILLION TIMES OVER ALREADY. BUT TODAY VENTOUSE IS ALL THAT MATTERS. I MUST GET THIS KLEPTANE HOME!
WE'LL BE THERE IN NO TIME, ISN'T THAT RIGHT, NARVAL?

NO. AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO TAKE THE ASTRONEF TO THE CITY, I CAN'T MAKE CHANGES TO SPECTRA'S TIME... IT'S JUST TOO DANGEROUS IN THIS STORM.
FINE. LIO AND I WILL GO ALONE.
BARBARELLA, DON'T BE FOOLISH. LET ME COME WITH YOU!
NO. THE MINI T.T.T. CAN ONLY TRANSFER A BUBBLE LARGE ENOUGH FOR TWO PEOPLE. AND BESIDES, I NEED YOU TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE TOUCHES THE CONTROLS. WE DON'T WANT NARVAL TRYING ANYTHING SNEAKY ON US!
I CAN SEE VENTOUSE! THAT'S THE CITY WHERE I WAS BORN!
BILL, DON'T FORGET – EVEN IF IT SEEMS LIKE I'M THERE AND BACK, I'LL BE GONE MORE THAN A MONTH. PAY ATTENTION TO MY MESSAGES AND BE READY TO COME AND GET ME.
OKAY, NOW!
AH! THE WIND! THE WIND!
MY PAINTINGS! BARBARELLA, MY PAINTINGS!
14

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO END IT ALL!
IT'S TOO MUCH TO BEAR. EVERYTHING'S SO UGLY... I DON'T CARE ANYMORE...
MY LIFE IS WASTED!
LIO! YOU LITTLE IDIOT! I SAVED TWO OF YOUR WATERCOLORS, THEY'RE MAGNIFICENT!
YOUR FATHER AND THE ENTIRE CITY OF VENTOUSE ARE DEPENDING ON YOU! I'LL CARRY THE BAG – YOU JUST HANG ON TO YOUR PAINTINGS AND SHOW ME THE WAY.
I'M COLD!
WHERE ARE THOSE PEOPLE GOING?
THEY'RE GETTING OUT! IT'S THE END! VENTOUSE IS GOING TO FALL APART AND MY PAINTINGS DON'T MATTER ANYMORE!
HEY!
OH NO! THERE THEY GO AGAIN!
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DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DO THAT, KID?! THERE'S ONLY ONE LEFT BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL!
THE CITY IS COLLAPSING! WE'RE GOING TO BE CRUSHED!
THESE BIG BEAMS HARDLY WEIGH ANYTHING. VENTOUSE IS BUILT OUT OF FERAPIUM – IT'S AS LIGHT AS PAPER!
MY DEAR LIO, AT LAST! MAY THE MINUTE-EATER BE PRAISED! DO YOU HAVE THE KLEPTANE, CHILD?
I DO HAVE THE KLEPTANE, FATHER – IT'S SOMEWHERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS BAG! THIS IS BARBARELLA, SHE COMES FROM ANOTHER TIME AND SPACE. SHE FOLLOWED ME HERE BECAUSE SHE'S IN LOVE WITH ME.
LIO! GIRL, THAT'S CRAZY-TALK!
HELLO SIR. I DO COME FROM EARTH AND--
--THAT'S NICE. YOU CAN CALL ME ARCHIVÈPRE!
COME NOW. LET US TRY TO SAVE VENTOUSE!
LATER, BUT NOT TOO MUCH LATER...
THERE WE ARE! IT'S DONE. THE ORIGINAL DEVICE (WHERE THE MAGNETISM COMES FROM) HAS RECEIVED ITS GRAM OF KLEPTANE. FROM NOW ON THE STORM CAN REAR ITS UGLY HEAD AND NOTHING WILL MOVE. LET'S GOHAVE A DRINK!
16

...BUT YOU SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE PERFECTLY, MS. BARBARELLA.
SHE LEARNED IT THE SAME WAY I LEARNED WHAT THEY CALL "GALACTIC ESPERANTO." THE TECHNIQUE'S EXHAUSTING, BUT NOT AT ALL UNPLEASANT. FATHER, DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW PAINTINGS FOR ME?
WHY? YOUR ROOM IS ALREADY FULL OF MAGNIFICENT WATERCOLORS, CHILD.
IT WAS. NOW THEY'RE ALL EITHER SUN-BLEACHED, WARPED, OR STOLEN!
I DON'T HAVE ANY MORE TO GIVE YOU. THE TROUBLES IN VENTOUSE DISCOURAGED THE MERCHANTS. WE HAVEN'T SEEN A CARAVAN IN MONTHS.
I'M GOING TO DIE...
THE STORM IS PASSING AT LAST. I'M AFRAID IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GO.
BILL MUST BE GETTING WORRIED. ALL THIS FUSS HAS COST A LOT OF TIME.
BILL! NARVAL! DO YOU COPY? WHERE ARE YOU?
BILL! BILL!
LIO, I'M AFRAID YOUR FRIEND MAY ALSO NEED SOME PAINTINGS TO CALM HER DOWN. I'M GOING TO SUGGEST SHE ACCOMPANY YOU TO LITTLE PHOUILLE TOMORROW AT DAWN.
CAN WE GO TODAY?
17

THIS IS TERRIBLE! I HAVEN'T BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY FOR MORE THAN TWO HOURS, BUT IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS FOR THE ASTRONEF AND ITS CREW.
NARVAL MUST HAVE LOST HIS PATIENCE AND TAKEN THE SHIP AWAY. OR MAYBE HE TRIED TO PASS INTO SPECTRA'S TIME AND DIDN'T MAKE IT? OR...I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT! I'M ALL ALONE!
LIO, YOU REALLY THINK PAINTINGS WILL HELP ME?
I'D DIE WITHOUT THEM. ANOTHER SIX HOURS UNTIL WE REACH LITTLE PHOUILLE. I'M NOT SURE I'LL LAST THAT LONG...
OH, SWEET BABY GIRL, TRY TO HOLD BACK YOUR TEARS. JUST TRY...
IT'S LIKE TRYING NOT TO BREATHE...
LADIES, LOOK! THE FIRST PAVON FIELDS, AND A BIT FURTHER INTO THE FOG THERE, THE SILHOUETTE OF MOUNT MOU!
WE HAVE ARRIVED AT LITTLE PHOUILLE – AS OPPOSED TO GREAT PHOUILLE ON THE HIGH PLATEAU. PEOPLE HERE DEDICATE THEMSELVES TO THE CULTIVATION OF PAVON, FROM WHICH THEY CREATE THE PAPER THAT MAKES THOSE PAINTINGS SO SPECIAL.
THEY RUN THE PAPER AND PRINTING INDUSTRIES FROM THESE BARGES. THERE ARE OTHERS RESERVED FOR THE ARTISTS WHO DO THE DESIGN--
SHUT UP FOR A SECOND! THE GIRL IS TRYING TO ASPHYXIATE HERSELF BY EATING HER FUR COAT. SHE NEEDS PAINTINGS IMMEDIATELY! SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING!

18 PROMISES PER PICTURE, I CAN'T GIVE IT TO YOU FOR ANY LESS.
BARGAIN, MISS. OFFER HIM TEN PROMISES... OR SAY THE PICTURES DON'T CALM YOU COMPLETELY!
I'LL TAKE THEM ALL. MY FATHER GAVE ME FIVE THOUSAND PROMISES AND TWELVE CERTAINTIES.
THAT'S OUR LATEST. IT'S A NEW SUBJECT – WE CALL IT, "THE ARRIVAL OF A COSMIC VESSEL."
SO I'M NOT DREAMING! THAT'S MY ASTRONEF! NARVAL DID SUCCEED IN PASSING THROUGH!
CAN IT BE? I'M NOT ALONE ON THIS WRETCHED PLANET AFTER ALL!
MARVELOUS!
MY FRIENDS ARE SOMEWHERE ON SPECTRA, AND WE ALL EXIST IN THE SAME TIME-STREAM!
COME THIS WAY. IT'S ALWAYS NICE OUT HERE!
WITH YOU AS A MODEL, I'M CERTAIN I COULD CREATE...
...SOMETHING... SPECIAL. COULD I CONVINCE YOU TO POSE FOR ME?
BUT OF COURSE, NATURALLY!
BARBARELLA, HAVE YOU MADE YOUR SELECTIONS? I'D LIKE TO GO HOME NOW, MY FATHER MUST BE WORRIED.
THE PAINTINGS, RIGHT! I ALMOST FORGOT.
LISTEN, LIO, I THINK I MIGHT STAY HERE FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS AND THEN GO FIND MY FRIENDS. I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU, THOUGH! I'LL COME BACK TO VENTOUSE... I'LL PASS THROUGH HERE AND BUY YOU ALL THE LATEST PAINTINGS – ONES SO FRESH THEY STILL SMELL LIKE PAVON AND INK.
NO! DON'T SAY THAT! YOU MUSTN'T!
THE MIST IS RISING...
JUST IN TIME FOR A SECOND FOG...

LET'S NOT STAY ON THE BRIDGE...
IT'S TOO *TERRIBLE* TO THINK ABOUT BEING SEPARATED! FOR THE MOMENT I CAN HOLD ON BECAUSE OF THE PAINTINGS, BUT TOMORROW I'LL CRY LIKE A BABY...
SHE'S PRECIOUS, THAT LITTLE ONE!
LET'S GO TO MY STUDIO.
IT SMELLS GOOD IN HERE.
THAT'S THE PAVON. I PAINT DIRECTLY ON THE PAPER TO GET THE MOST BRILLIANT COLORS.
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD GUIDE ME TO THE ASTRONEF? I'M GOING TO NEED TO FIND MY FRIENDS.
SURE. NOTHING COULD BE SIMPLER.
OH MY. THAT SECOND FOG IS GETTING THICKER. I DON'T KNOW IF WE'LL BE ABLE TO WORK IN PEACE.
BUT I AM WORRIED! AND I CAN ONLY THINK OF ONE WAY TO EASE MY MIND – LET'S MAKE LOVE RIGHT AWAY!
THE FOG AFFECTS YOUR WORK?
THIS KIND OF FOG – WHAT WE CALL A *SECOND* FOG – IS PARTICULARLY TROUBLING. IT WAKES THE SLEEPING BEASTS IN THE JUNGLES OF PAVON AND BENEATH THE GREY WATER OF THE MARSH. DON'T WORRY THOUGH, MY DEAR. WE ARTISTS KNOW HOW TO DEFEND OURSELVES!
20

LOOK OUT! SPARAGOUTES!
UH... YOU KNOW THEM?

UNFORTUNATELY, EVERYONE KNOWS THE MARSH SKIMMERS. THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SECOND FOG TO ATTACK OUR BARGES!

WE'LL BE SEPARATED AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME. I'M BARBARELLA!
MY NAME IS L'ORTICARIO!

WATCH OUT FOR THE PAVON LEAVES! THEY USE THEM AS TRAPS!

TOO LATE! ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO WARN ME ABOUT?

THE KITES!

THE SECOND FOG IS LIFTING!
YES, IT IS LIFTING.
GOOD! THE SPARAGOUTES WON'T COME BACK WITHOUT COVER!

L'ORTICARIO WAS NICE. I HOPE HE'S OKAY...
THE SPARAGOUTES LET GO OF MY KITE! I WONDER IF THIS IS NORMAL? NOW THE WIND IS TAKING ME TOWARD THE HIGHLANDS...
IS THIS GREAT PHOUILLE?
CLANG
CHLANG
BLANG
THIS COMES FROM THE SPARAGOUTES, SANCTOR CATAMANCHE!
HOW MUCH ARE THEY ASKING?
SOMETHING ABSURD... SHE'S AN IMPORT!
DO YOU WANT US TO COOL HER DOWN A BIT?
SHE SEEMS ALL RIGHT LIKE THIS. PASS ME THE SCISSORS...
22

OH! NO!
MY APOLOGIES, SANCTOR, BUT THE OLD ONES ARE ASKING FOR YOU... SOMETHING'S GOT THEM ALL RILED UP.
AH! IT'S BEEN A WHILE!
MVAAAH! MVAAAMVAAA!
EVERY TIME THE OLD ONES START TO BELLOW, IT RAINS!
THIS WEATHER'S CRAZY. ON THAT NOTE, WHAT TIME IS IT?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? THE MINUTE-EATER WEAKENED THE CLOCKS.
THE OLD ONES ARE BEGINNING TO GET ON MY NERVES!
THEY GOT A MESSAGE FROM THE SOUDAIN PEOPLE!
YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE ME HERE LIKE THIS! LET ME OUT OF THIS PAVON LEAF AND TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON!
I'M SUFFO-CATING!
RELAX!
THANKS. YOU KNOW IT'S NOT EXACTLY BEACH WEATHER...
FINE. PICK OUT SOMETHING TO WEAR FROM HERE AND THEN COME WITH ME. WE'RE GOING TO VISIT THE OLD ONES.
MYAOW! MYAOW!
BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THEY MADE SUCH A FUSS!
DOESN'T MEAN A THING... THE MINUTE-EATER TAKES AS LONG AS IT LIKES!
RESPECT!
YOU COULDN'T CALL FIRST?
WHAT'S THIS? I SMELL A WOMAN!
WOULD HE COME WITH ONE OF THOSE CREATURES?

SO? WHAT DO YOU WANT? YOU ALL KNOW THAT I HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO! IF YOU KEEP INTERRUPTING ME, I'M GOING TO MAKE A MISTAKE IN THE LEDGERS!
LIAR!
LIBERTINE!
THAT GIRL IS SKINNY AND PALE, SHE'LL DIE BEFORE THE DAY'S OUT!
THE ADMINISTRATION OF GREAT PHOUILLE IS DERELICT! NEGLIGENT!
NO ONE EVER COMES TO SCRATCH US ANYMORE!
WE'VE RETURNED TO SAVAGERY!
ARE THEY ALWAYS THIS WHINEY?
ALWAYS! MY FATHER – TOP OF THE PILE ON THE LEFT – SAID HIMSELF THAT NO ONE HAS EVER SEEN THE OLD ONES SMILE!
RASCALS!
WHO'S KEEPING WATCH OVER THE TERRITORY?
FOREIGNERS FROM ANOTHER TIME AND SPACE HAVE PILLAGED THE KLEPTANE RESERVES OF THE SOUDAIN.
THEY ATTACKED THE ITALIC NOMADS!
FINE! NOTHING TO DO BUT TO EXTERMINATE THEM, THEN. I'LL GIVE THE ORDER. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
THERE MUST BE A MISUNDERSTANDING! THOSE ARE MY FRIENDS, I'M SURE OF IT!
SHE ADMITS IT! SHE'S ONE OF THEM!
CAREFUL! HE'LL BITE YOU!

YOU'VE GOT SOME MOXIE, GIRL. IT'S TOO BAD ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS. I'M MOST LIKELY GOING TO HAVE TO EXECUTE YOU.
THAT WOULD BE SUCH A...WASTE...
I HAD SUCH PLANS FOR YOU AND ME!
I'M AFRAID I'M NOT IN THE MOOD...
...YOU SEE? YOU WERE IN THE MOOD. YOU JUST WEREN'T TRYING HARD ENOUGH.
TOUCHÉ. AND NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I MUST GO ATTEND TO THE BOOKKEEPING... AND ORGANIZE THAT EXPEDITION TO TAKE DOWN YOUR FRIENDS.
I THINK 2,000 WARRIORS OUGHT TO DO IT. A DOZEN TANK SAWS, THREE GRENADE THROWERS...
LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, SANCTOR CATAMANCHE!
WHAT?
MY FRIENDS POSSESS A WEAPON YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST.
YOUR FRIENDS ARE ARMED? THEY HAVE DEFENSES?
OH MY, YES. TOO BAD FOR YOU...
YOUR CHIEF, SANCTOR CATAMANCHE, IS AN EXTREMELY CLEVER MAN. ENTRUSTING THE SETTLEMENT OF THIS AFFAIR TO ME IS VERY SHREWD.
HEH. WHAT SANCTOR IS, IS LAZY. HE AVOIDS HIS DUTIES EVERY CHANCE HE GETS AND NO ONE'S EVER BEEN ABLE TO HOLD HIM ACCOUNTABLE.
HE WON'T PLAY POLITICS. NO ONE CAN MAKE HIM.
MOST OF US WOULD DO THE SAME...

DID SANCTOR, IN HIS MAGNIFICENT PRUDENCE, SHARE WITH YOU THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS MISSION?
HE TOLD US TO TAKE YOU TO THE MOUNTAINS, WHERE THE INVADERS HAVE LANDED THEIR ASTRONEF. THE REST IS FOR YOU TO SORT OUT.
IT'S A LONG WAY. TELL ME A STORY TO PASS THE TIME! A LEGEND FROM YOUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. I KNOW THE ONE ABOUT THE MUTATION STONE, BUT I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT AGAIN.
I DON'T KNOW THAT ONE, BUT THERE'S ONE ABOUT THE ANIMAL LAKE – WHEN NIGHT FALLS THERE, TINY FLOWERS GROW ON ITS BANK. THEIR PERFUME IS SO INTOXICATING THAT FISH JUMP FROM THE WATER AND THE DEAD RISE FROM THEIR GRAVES.
THEN WHAT?
THEN NOTHING. THAT'S IT.
LOOK! AM I DREAMING? THE SKY IS REFLECTING THE LANDSCAPE!
GAH! THE WRATH OF THE MINUTE-EATER!
WHAT DID YOU CALL THAT THING??
THAT THING IS THE BEAST WE CALL TIME!
I THINK I UNDERSTAND NOW. SPECTRA IS LOCATED ON THE FRONTIER OF THE SPACE-TIME CONTINUUM THAT SEPARATES THE OBSCURE PLANETS FROM THE REST OF THE GALAXY. THERE'S A CONSTANT BATTLE BETWEEN THE TWO UNIVERSES THAT CAUSES SPATIO-TEMPORAL STORMS... AND TODAY THAT HAS MANIFESTED AS A MIRROR IN THE SKY...
...BUT TOMORROW AN ENTIRE PORTION OF THE PLANET COULD BE TURNED INSIDE-OUT, LIKE A GLOVE!
AH, THE ASTRONEF AT LAST! BUT IT'S GOT ITS BELLY IN THE AIR LIKE A DEAD FISH!

WAIT, NO...! HOW COULD I BE SO DUMB? IT ISN'T UPSIDE DOWN! THAT'S JUST THE REFLECTION! IT'S THE MINUTE-EATER AGAIN!
THAT'S GOOD! STOP. I'M GOING TO GO THE REST OF THE WAY ON FOOT. IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, I'LL HOLLER!
BILL?! 'TIMEC?! ARE YOU THERE?
I HEAR SOMETHING! THIS WAY, I THINK...
MY FRIEND TARABUSTE, AND THE ROBOT!
WHERE'S NARVAL? AND BILL AND 'TIMEC?
MECH-AN-IC-AL-NOT-KNOW...
WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, MA'AM. WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ANYTHING.
WE ARE HERE TO FEED THE GREAT EAR! THEY SAID IT MUST NOT DIE.
YOU'RE KIDDING ME!
THE OTHERS LEFT LONG AGO, MA'AM. THEY MAY NEVER COME BACK!
BIG BIG
MY BOYS FELT GUILTY. THEY MUST HAVE PARTICIPATED, BY WILL OR BY FORCE, IN THE WAR BETWEEN THE SOUDAIN AND THE ITALIC NOMADS... I'M GOING TO TAKE A BATH AND THINK THIS THROUGH!
27

BILL'S JACKET IN MY CABIN! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
MY DEAR OLD FRIEND, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?
TOWARD THE NORTH SABURE
BILL AND NARVAL HAVE DISAPPEARED SOMEWHERE TOWARD THE NORTH, TARABUSTE AND MECHABOT AREN'T TALKING, I'VE GOT THREE SOLDIERS FROM PHOUILLE ON STANDBY AND YET I'M ALL ALONE IN A BATHTUB. NOT EXACTLY THE ADVENTURE I WAS HOPING FOR...
SCHTOC! SCHTOC!
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S US, THE PHOUILLE!
WE WERE AFRAID SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU!
YOU'RE TOO KIND. YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYONE ON YOUR WAY HERE, DID YOU?
SOME WEIRD GUY AND A ROBOT. THEY WEREN'T EXACTLY FRIENDLY.
HE'S KIDDING!
YEAH? WELL, NOW YOU BRAVE SOLDIERS ARE GOING TO NEED TO KEEP WATCH IN THE CORRIDOR WHILE YOUR BEAUTIFUL STRANGER GETS OUT OF HER BATH.
RIGHT AFTER YOU HELP ME WITH MY TOWELS, I GUESS...

OW! YOU CAN'T REASON WITH SAVAGES!
MECH-AN-IC NOT HAP-PY! THE-NEXT-TIME MECH-AN-IC HIT FIRST.
GOOD TIMING! IF THE TRIC TRAC TRANSFER IS STILL IN THE ASTRONEF, BRING IT HERE BEFORE THOSE WACKJOBS GET OUT OF THE SHOWER AND TAKE IT! AND HURRY...! I DON'T THINK I'VE GOT ANOTHER ROUND IN ME.
WACK-JOBS BREAK ARM OF MECH-AN-IC!
PERFECT!
THIS WAY TO THE STABLES?
YES, MA'AM. THE MEHENDRE AND THE BEAST WITH THE BUMPS ARE RIGHT BEHIND THAT PARTITION. AT NIGHT, YOU CAN HEAR THEM GROWL...
THE TRIC TRAC TRANSFER, INVENTED BY NARVAL, ALLOWS TRANSFER FROM ONE SPACE-TIME TO ANOTHER...
COME ON, TARABUSTE!
I THINK IT'S TIME!
WITH PLEASURE, MA'AM.
WACK-JOBS COME THROUGH SMALL BOX.
THEY SHOULD REAPPEAR RIGHT IN THE MOONWORM'S CAGE!
PERFECT! BE CAREFUL WITH THESE NEW BOARDERS, FELLAS. CAPTIVITY WON'T MAKE THEM ANY LESS DANGEROUS, BUT DON'T LET THEM STARVE. GIVE THEM THE SAME SOUP YOU GIVE THE NONANTE DRAGON.

WHAT COULD'VE MADE NARVAL ATTACK THE ITALIC NOMADS AND STEAL THE SOUDAIN'S KLEPTANE? AND HOW COULD HE HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM?
THEY MUST HAVE HELPED!
BILL AND 'TIMEC WOULD HAVE RESISTED. IF THEY SUFFERED... NARVAL WILL PAY!
ALL RIGHT! TO THE NORTH...!
IT'S LIKE TIME IS FOLDING OVER ON ITSELF... IS IT THE RAIN, THE NIGHT, OR THE MINUTE-EATER...?
I CAN'T SEE... I'M HUNGRY AND TIRED... BEST TO STOP AND WAIT FOR DAYBREAK.
30

WHAT THE...? HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THERE?
I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU...
L'ORTICARIO! YOU'RE NOT PAINTING!
I GAVE IT UP! IT WAS TOO DEPRESSING. ESPECIALLY THAT KIND OF PAINTING... I DIDN'T WANT PEOPLE I HATED TO BASK IN HAPPINESS BECAUSE THEY HAD MY PICTURES HANGING ABOVE THEIR BEDS. THE IDEA MADE ME SICK!
WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?
POETRY! IT'S GOING WELL. WAIT...
...YOU HAVE A FISH ON YOUR BACK.
IT WAS FEMALE!
SON OF AIR, DAUGHTER OF WATER! THE FISH OF WINTER... BECOMES A BIRD OF SUMMER.
I'M COLD, OFFER ME A DRINK.
I'D LIKE TO PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF...
CAREFUL. LAST TIME IT ENDED WITH A MONSTER KNOCKING AT THE DOOR...
OH. YOU HAVE COMPANY.
YES. MY PERSONAL GUARD AGAINST THE MONSTERS.
YOU DON'T SAY? OKAY, I'LL BUY IT.
ARGYNE AND CHYLIS. THEY MAKE TEA AND SAMISCH, SING, PLAY THE PALOTE... THEY CAN COAX WATER FROM RUST AND FIRE FROM MOISTURE. AND THEY KEEP THE PLACE WARM...
THEY'RE CERTAINLY WARMING ME UP...!
MMM. WARM IS GOOD.
A LITTLE SOMETHING TO NIBBLE ON, PERHAPS?

SAY L'ORTICARIO, WHAT IS THAT? THAT GLOW?
IT'S THE DAWN, BARBARELLA. ARE YOU TIRED?
NO, I ITCH... IT MIGHT BE THE SAMISCH.
SABURE, TO THE NORTH, DOES THAT SOUND FAMILIAR?
IF WE DON'T FIGHT THE CURRENT, THIS OLD ROWBOAT WILL TAKE US RIGHT THERE LIKE IT KNOWS THE WAY.
MAGNIFI-CENT!
MAYBE. OR WE MIGHT BE SMARTER TO HEAD THE OTHER WAY.
I KNOW SABURE. THAT PLACE IS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE...
I'M NOT WORRIED. I'LL GET OFF AT THE NEXT STOP. THANK YOU, L'ORTICARIO. YOU SAVED ME FROM THE WATER AND YOU KEPT ME WARM. I OWE YOU...
REALLY? OKAY, REMEMBER LIO, THE ARCHIVEPRE'S DAUGHTER? I WOULDN'T MIND GETTING HER NUMBER...
VENTOUSE 10.18.

BYE, L'ORTICARIO! TELL LIO I DO LOVE HER!
THAT'S SOME CROWD.
L'ORTICARIO WAS RIGHT, THERE'S SOMETHING UNSETTLING ABOUT THIS PLACE. IT'S DARK AND COLD AND IT SMELLS FUNNY...
SIR, I'M LOOKING FOR A FISH MAN... I MEAN, A MAN WHO LIVES UNDER WATER... AND SOME PEOPLE LIKE ME – FOREIGNERS.
SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE WANTS.
SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE WANTS...BUT SHE DOESN'T DARE SAY IT.
WE HAVE TO HELP HER.
I ALWAYS KNOW WHAT I WANT – WHERE I WANT IT AND WHEN...
...AND ABOVE ALL, HOW!
33

BAH! I BOTCHED MY EXIT AND LANDED IN A GARBAGE DUMP.
THERE'S A TERRIBLE DRAFT... I'VE GOT TO FIND A PLACE TO TAKE SHELTER.
SO COLD... AND SO TIRED...! A LITTLE NIP OF BRANDY AND BILL'S VEST FOR COVER...
WELL, WELL, L'ORTICARIO, HAVE YOU LOST YOUR HEAD? POETRY NOT WORKING?
ON THE CONTRARY! EVERYONE WANTED SOME. MY GOD, HOW IT AROUSED THEM.
I COULDN'T PROVIDE IT FAST ENOUGH. MY BUSINESS COLLAPSED. NOW I SELL PISTOLS. THERE'S NOT MUCH DEMAND AND I CAN ALREADY SEE THIS STORY ENDING BADLY.
GOOD LORD, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF THEM – MILLIONS!
BAH! I'LL NEVER TAKE THEM ALL, THOSE PEOPLE THERE, BUT ME, L'ORTICARIO, I KNOW MYSELF – I AM BARBARELLA!
MILLIONS, BILLIONS!
BUT I-I'M BARBARELLA!
AND THEY'RE INTELLIGENT...
I AM BARBARELLA!
34
FORGET

IF THEY'RE NOT INTELLIGENT, THEY'RE QUICK DRAWS! TERRIBLY QUICK!
BUT! I'M BARBARELLA!
L'ORTICARIO, I WAS BARBARELLA!
YES, YES, I REMEMBER PERFECTLY!
LONG LIVE RWABELLA!
LONG LIVE RWABELLA!
LONG LIVE RWABELLA!
LONG LIVE BARELLA!
SHE COMES FROM PLANET EARTH IN ANOTHER TIME AND SPACE, AND DEFEATS THOSE FOES WHO WOULD OPPOSE HER WILL IN BED WITH LOVE'S EMBRACE.
WHAT A NIGHTMARE! AM I STILL DREAMING?
IN BED, WITH LOVE'S EMBRACE WHEN YOU'RE THERE, BARBARELLA WE DON'T SAY A THING, WE DON'T SAY A THING.
WHEN YOU'RE THERE, BARBARELLA, WE DON'T SAY A THING, WE JUST SING.
WHAT A STUPID SONG! I MUST BE DREAMING...
BILL! 'TIMEC! MY FRIENDS HAVE MADE ME A LEGEND! I'M TOUCHED.
DELIRIUM'S LOST ITS MONSTERS AND BILL HAS LOST HIS VEST...
COME BACK TO US, BARBARELLA... BARBARELLA, YOU'RE THE BEST
THEIR ACT'S A FLOP. BUT I THINK I CAN HELP...
35

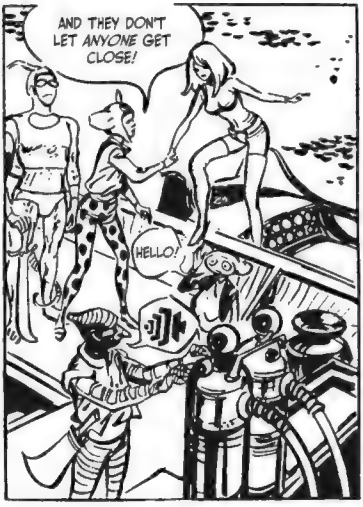
WHEN YOU'RE HERE, BARBARELLA, ALL IS WELL, ALL IS WELL...
COME BACK, BARBARELLA, WE'RE IN HELL, WE'RE IN HELL...
!
!
MY GIRL! MY LOVE! AT LAST! I WAS AFRAID WE'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN.
OH, BILL! MY CLOWN, MY SWEET, SWEET CLOWN!
TELL ME, WHERE IS NARVAL AND WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* IN THIS STINKY TOWN?
NOTHING REALLY, NOTHING... THERE WAS A *MUTINY!* PART OF THE CREW DISAPPEARED.
THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM HAS... DOWNSIZED. NO MORE WONDERFULLY HORRIBLE SHOWS, NO MORE--
--CUT THE CRAP, BILL! TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO NARVAL, AND WHAT HIS ROLE WAS IN THIS MUTINY!
HE PREPARED HIS ATTACK WELL...
HE DID PLAY THE VILLAIN, BUT I-I WASN'T MUCH OF A HERO... I LET MYSELF BE DISARMED LIKE A BABE...
LEAN OVER THERE AND LOOK.
ALL I SEE IS WATER!
SABURE SULLIES THE SEA BY POURING ALL ITS MUCK DOWN THERE. MAYBE IT'S JUST AS WELL... WHAT'S BENEATH THE SURFACE ISN'T TOO PRETTY. AT THE BOTTOM, THERE'S THE VESTIGES OF A CITY LIKE THIS ONE, ABOVE THAT, A LAYER OF GARBAGE – ALONG WITH AT LEAST TWO WRECKED BARGES – AND ON TOP OF *THAT*, THE NASTIEST BIT YET: *NARVAL!*

HE FAILED, THEN? POOR NARVAL! THE MUTATION STONE WAS JUST A LEGEND AND COULDN'T TRANSFORM HIS GILLS INTO LUNGS.
OH, ON THE CONTRARY! NOW HE BREATHES AIR JUST LIKE YOU AND ME. WELL...ALMOST...

WE'RE NOT IN THIS ROTTEN CITY BY CHANCE! NARVAL HANDED HIMSELF OVER TO THE SURGEONS HERE AND THEY GRAFTED LUNGS ONTO HIS BODY.
THEN WHY IS HE STILL DOWN BELOW?

THE SURGERY WAS SUCCESSFUL, BUT HE COULDN'T OVERCOME HIS FEAR OF AIR! REMEMBER HOW IT SCARED HIM?
UNBELIEVABLE. CAN WE SEE HIM?

HOW DOES HE BREATHE, THEN?
THE TWO MEN ON THAT PONTOON ARE THERE NIGHT AND DAY TO ENSURE THAT HE HAS OXYGEN.


AND THEY DON'T LET ANYONE GET CLOSE!
HELLO!

YOU'LL NEED TO STEP DOWN...
BARBARELLA! WHAT A SURPRISE! HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?

I HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOUR ADVENTURES, NARVAL. THAT YOUR DREAM ENDED IN A PILE OF FILTH MIGHT'VE GARNERED MY COMPASSION, IF YOU HADN'T INCITED MY CREW TO MUTINY AND THEN LEFT THEM IN THE COMPANY OF THIEVES!

WHO WOULD BLAME YOU? I DIDN'T JUST LET IT HAPPEN, I ORDERED IT. I ORDERED THAT WE ATTACK THE SOUDAIN AND THAT WE STRIP THEM OF THEIR KLEPTANE RESERVE. IT'S THE MOST PRECIOUS MATERIAL ON THIS PLANET, YOU KNOW!

AS FOR THE GOLD OF THE ITALIC NOMADS... IT ALLOWS ME TO PAY FOR INDIGENOUS MERCENARIES. RIGHT THIS MOMENT, I HAVE SEVERAL HUNDRED WELL-ARMED MEN WAITING FOR MY ORDER TO SEIZE SABURE.
YOU'RE MAD. WE'RE NOT HERE TO CONQUER ANYONE.
OH, I WON'T GIVE UP FINDING THE SORCERER WHO CAN RELIEVE ME OF THIS NIGHTMARISH FEAR OF AIR, BUT...SPECTRA OFFERS TREMENDOUS RESOURCES! FOR A MAN IN GREAT PAIN, THIS WILL BE SWEET REVENGE!
AND YOU INTEND TO LEAD ALL OF THAT FROM HERE? SEATED ON THIS THRONE OF GARBAGE, TWO METERS UNDERWATER, WITH YOUR SUPPLY OF OXYGEN ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON THE VIGILANCE OF YOUR MEN?
...AND WITH YOUR HELP, BARBARELLA.
YOU MISLED ME, NARVAL. I MAY LIKE SWIMMING, BUT YOU HAVE BAD FORM!
FORGET NON-VIOLENCE TODAY!
GOOD RIDDANCE!
MAY GOD, MINUTE-EATER, OR WHATEVER, FORGIVE ME!
NO, NO, NOT THAT!
I'M NO BETTER THAN A PIRATE! NO, NO...!

OUR CAMP ISN'T FAR FROM HERE, IT'S QUIET, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP IF YOU'D LIKE.
THERE ISN'T MUCH TO EAT OR TO DRINK, BUT I'LL TAKE CARE OF THAT...
I'M COLD. I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO THROW UP... DO YOU THINK HE'S DEAD?
I DIDN'T CHECK... TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT. HEY, IT WAS NICE OF YOU TO HAVE BROUGHT MY VEST BACK.
BILL! BILL!! I-I FEEL FEVERISH...OR MAYBE JUST RESTLESS? I'M UPSET, I CAN'T STAND IT, I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! TAKE OFF THOSE RIDICULOUS CLOWN CLOTHES!
I CAN'T LOOK AT THESE CLOTHES ANOTHER MINUTE!
QUICKLY! TAKE THEM OFF!
OH, BILL! BILL! I NEED LOVE!
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THE MINUTE-EATER IS RAVENOUS, IT SEEMS...
HE'S POSITIVELY INSATIABLE!

STILL NO SIGN OF HIM! HIS BODY MUST HAVE WASHED OUT TO SEA.
I HOPED THAT HIS FEAR OF DYING WOULD HAVE OVERCOME HIS FEAR OF THE AIR AND THAT HE WOULD HAVE SURFACED TO BREATHE...
FOREST
40

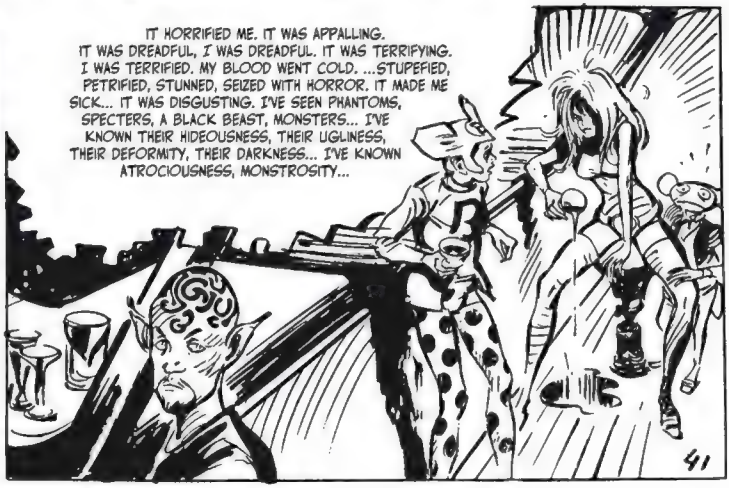
AND HIS MEN? THE MERCENARIES HE CLAIMED TO HAVE PAID WITH THE NOMAD GOLD?
DISAPPEARED. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN PAID WELL ENOUGH TO SKIP TOWN.

HOW COULD I HAVE DONE SUCH A THING? CUT OFF HIS OXYGEN... AND THEN MAKE NO EFFORT TO SAVE HIM? I WAS CRAZY WITH RAGE.
I'M BEGGING YOU, PLEASE TRY TO THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE. COME HAVE A DRINK!

FOR THE GENTLEMEN AND THE LADY?
A JUICE!
A VAZI-VAZI!
A DOUBLE VAZI-VAZI!

TELL US ABOUT YOUR TRIP! YOU MUST HAVE HAD SOME ADVENTURES BEFORE YOU MET US IN SABURE...
YOU SAW LITTLE AND GREAT PHOUILLE. ARE THEY AS BEAUTIFUL AS THEY SAY?
THEY'RE HORRIBLE! I ABHOR, LOATHE, HATE, AND DESPISE THINGS THERE. YES... IT'S...IT'S HATE, REVULSION, DISGUST...

I KNEW TERROR AND DREAD... IT WAS A NIGHTMARE. I SUFFERED TORMENT. THE SENSATION, THE SEIZURE, THE STUPOR, THE STUPEFACTION... YES, I WAS STUPEFIED, I WAS DISTURBED, I WAS LOST. LOST... WILD-EYED...
I FELT MYSELF TREMBLING. I SHOOK. I QUIVERED. I SHIVERED. I HAD GOOSEBUMPS. I GNASHED MY TEETH. IT WAS AN OUTRAGE. I WAS OUTRAGED! I CURSED HIM, I CRIED OUT MALEDICTIONS, INSULTS...


IT HORRIFIED ME. IT WAS APPALLING. IT WAS DREADFUL, I WAS DREADFUL. IT WAS TERRIFYING. I WAS TERRIFIED. MY BLOOD WENT COLD. ...STUPEFIED, PETRIFIED, STUNNED, SEIZED WITH HORROR. IT MADE ME SICK... IT WAS DISGUSTING. I'VE SEEN PHANTOMS, SPECTERS, A BLACK BEAST, MONSTERS... I'VE KNOWN THEIR HIDEOUSNESS, THEIR UGLINESS, THEIR DEFORMITY, THEIR DARKNESS... I'VE KNOWN ATROCIOUSNESS, MONSTROSITY...

WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE IN THE FUNNY UNIFORMS?
THE BORDERMEN! THE BLIGHT OF SABURE! THEY SPEND HOURS IN FRONT OF THAT MIRROR, GAZING AT THEMSELVES IN SILENCE AND KEEPING ANYONE FROM PASSING BY...
WHY?
WHO KNOWS?! IT'S SO IRRITATING IT CAUSES FIGHTS.
AND PEOPLE JUST LET IT HAPPEN?
NOT ALWAYS...
...SOMETIMES THEY PELT 'EM WITH WOODEN BLOCKS. THAT'S THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH. TAKE OUT AS MANY AS POSSIBLE! BUT THEY ALWAYS COME BACK STRONGER.
HERE WE GO AGAIN, THEY'RE CHARGING!
THEY'RE CHASING THAT YOUNG MAN!
NOTHING NEW. THEY SEE A FELLA ALL ALONE – ESPECIALLY A FOREIGNER – AND THEY GO AFTER HIM.
SETTLE UP! CLOSING TIME!
DON'T GO! WHERE CAN WE FIND WOODEN BLOCKS?
OWWWWW!
YES, WHERE? THE ONLY WOOD I SEE HERE IS THE WOODEN FLOOR.
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU COULD "FIND" WOODEN BLOCKS IN SABURE! BUT YOU CAN BUY THEM! THERE'S A MERCHANT OVER THERE!
BUY SOME BLOCKS!
KEEP THE CHANGE!
THERE, THERE! DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY! THEY STOLE FROM ME AND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE!
HEY! IF YOU DON'T LIKE ROSES, DON'T SELL PERFUME!

GET HER! SHE'S NOT FROM AROUND HERE! WE'LL MAKE HER EAT HER TONGUE SABURIAN STYLE!
YEAH, WE'RE GOING TO MAKE HER EAT HER TONGUE!
SAFE! BUT WHERE ARE BILL AND TIMEC?
WHAT A WEIRD SPOT! LOOKS LIKE THE CITY'S ATTIC...
...WITH WINDOWS TO ITS ROOFS...
GREAT. AND NOW IT'S RAINING.
LET GO!
YOU'RE IN DANGER!
IN GRAVE DANGER!
SHE CAN'T COME AND GO LIKE THAT, ALL ALONE! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
DO YOU WANT TO DRINK SOMETHING WARM? TO TAKE THE CHILL OFF?
43

I DON'T NEED ANYTHING OR ANYONE!
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOUTH NEVER ABANDONS A WOMAN IN DANGER!
OH! YOU NEARLY SLIPPED!
CALM DOWN! YOU'RE NOT ALONE. YOU WERE MADE TO LOVE AND TO BE LOVED...
MADE FOR LOOOVE...
NO! NO! NO!
YOU MUST DRINK IT WHILE IT'S STILL HOT!
WHERE ARE BILL AND 'TIMEC? AND...AND...NARVAL...? NARVAL WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT LIKE THAT, NOT WITHOUT SAYING SOMETHING!
I'M ALL DIRTY...
COME... I'LL HELP YOU GET CLEANED UP...
44

MADEMOISELLE, PLEASE! WE'RE LOOKING FOR A YOUNG WOMAN, A FOREIGNER. WE WERE TOLD THAT PERHAPS...
HEY, BLONDIE! IT'S FOR YOU! TWO FUNNY GUYS. THEY LOOK A LITTLE SHY.
NOTHING IS EVER FUNNY, NOTHING AND NO ONE...
I WAS HOPING YOU'D NEVER FIND ME...
I'M NOT A PRISONER, YOU KNOW, AND... THERE'S NO REASON FOR DRAMA...
HONESTLY...
NARVAL, NARVAL...
NARVAL...
NARVAL...
IF THEY HAD ANY NEWS... THEY WOULDN'T HAVE WAITED TO GIVE IT TO ME...
NARVAL MUST BE DEAD...
I'M TIRED... SO TIRED...
I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP...
NO! MADO, NO!
!
I WON'T ASK YOU WHY... I WON'T ASK YOU ANYTHING... JUST LET ME TAKE CARE OF IT... LET ME COMFORT YOU...
OH! NO, THAT'S JUST IT.
45

I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU...
IMPORTANT?
YES... AND IT'S SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER GUESS...
I WAS DESIGNED FOR LOVE 800 YEARS AGO. QUITE THE TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT! HASN'T EVER BEEN IMPROVED UPON, THEY SAY...
I HAD MY FIRST BREAK-DOWN LAST CENTURY...
WHAT I MEAN IS, I TURNED COLD...LIKE A HEAP OF SCRAP METAL. AND WHEN I'M COLD... WHOEVER I'M WITH TURNS COLD TOO. THE SPECIALISTS DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ABOUT MY MECHANICS... ONCE OR TWICE I'VE MANAGED TO REPAIR MYSELF, BUT IT NEVER LASTS MORE THAN A COUPLE OF DAYS AND NOW... I CAN'T EVEN FEEL MY FINGERTIPS ANYMORE...
I'M AFRAID! I'M AFRAID I'M IRREPARABLE!
MAY I? I KNEW A ROBOT ONCE, HE WAS A MALE, BUT EVERYTHING FUNCTIONED PRETTY WELL...
DID YOU STUDY ELECTRONICS?
NO, I STUDIED HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NANTERRE, ON THE PLANET WHERE I WAS BORN... BUT I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I STUDIED HIS ELECTRONICS. AND I'M PRETTY HANDY AS THESE THINGS GO.
WITHOUT A SCREWDRIVER YOU'LL NEVER GET IN THERE...
WAIT AND SEE...
A A A AAAAAAH!
A-AH!
THAT WAS...THAT WAS MARVELOUS! HOW DID YOU DO THAT?
I DON'T KNOW, MADO...BUT I CAN DO IT AS MANY TIMES AS YOU LIKE!

THAT'LL DO FOR A WHILE. THANKS TO YOU, I THINK I'LL BE ALL RIGHT. I WISH I COULD DO THE SAME FOR YOU, BARBARELLA. YOU SEEM SO DESPONDENT.
IT WOULDN'T HELP, MADO. I'D CRY OUT "AH! AH! THAT'S MARVELOUS!" BUT I'D STILL BE SAD AND BLUE.
I'D HAVE TO LOSE MY MEMORY...
THEN PERHAPS I CAN GIVE YOU SOMETHING ELSE TO THINK ABOUT... YOU'RE IN GRAVE AND IMMEDIATE DANGER.
FROM WHAT? SOMETHING HERE?
THERE ARE 3,333 CONCUBINES IN SABURE AND UNTIL NOW, PLENTY OF BUSINESS FOR EVERYONE. BUT SINCE YOUR ARRIVAL... OUR REGULAR CUSTOMERS TRANSFER FABULOUS SUMS OF MONEY TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOUTH JUST TO SPEND A SINGLE HOUR IN YOUR COMPANY.
FABULOUS SUMS, REALLY?
BARBARELLA, THERE ARE GIRLS HERE WHO HAVEN'T SOLD SO MUCH AS A SMILE FOR TEN DAYS. THEY DON'T LIKE YOU VERY MUCH!
BUT I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING ON PURPOSE. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW.
I UNDERSTAND, BUT THE OTHERS DON'T! THEY'RE DISTRAUGHT. THERE'S EVEN A DELEGATION DISCUSSING IT WITH THE BROTHERHOOD RIGHT NOW - THEY'RE DEMANDING YOUR EXECUTION!
EXECUTION! WHAT A GRAND IDEA!
CAREFUL!
THE BROTHERS! LEAVE! I DON'T WANT THEM TO SEE YOU WITH ME. THEY'LL MAKE YOUR LIFE MISERABLE.
COME WITH US!
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOUTH MET IN AN EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL AND THEY DESIRE TO SPEAK TO YOU.
EXCEPTIONAL TALENTS AND SERVICES COMMAND EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES!
BARBARELLA, HERE, BEFORE THE MINUTE-EATER, WE, THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE MOUTH, PROTECTORATE OF CONCUBINES AND MASTERS OF SABURE...
...IN AGREEMENT WITH THE SATISFIED ORDER OF THE BORDERMEN AND THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF MERCHANTS, HAVE DECIDED TO ELEVATE YOU TO THE RANK OF VOLUPTINE ...
...FOR NEVER WAS THERE A BETTER CONCUBINE ON THE PLANET SPECTRA!
IT'S TRUE: VICE IS MY VIRTUE!
47

GIRL FROM ANOTHER SPACE AND ANOTHER TIME, REJOICE! FOR FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, YOU WILL DEDICATE YOURSELF SOLELY TO THE SERVICE OF THE BROTHERS AND MINDING THE GREAT HOUR-GLASS.
WE WILL TEACH YOU TO READ THE FALLING SANDS AND USE THEM TO PREDICT THE MINUTE-EATER'S OUTBURSTS!
MADO, WHAT IS THIS? I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO KILL ME?
THE BROTHERS ARE SPITEFUL AND CRUEL... THEY'RE UP TO SOMETHING!
FIRST I'M A WHORE...
...THEN I'M A SAINT!
...WHAT'S NEXT, MARRIAGE?
ALL DONE RESTING, GIRL?
NO! DON'T CUT IT! GIVE ME THE MUSLIN CLOTH!
YES, YES! THAT'S THE WAY!

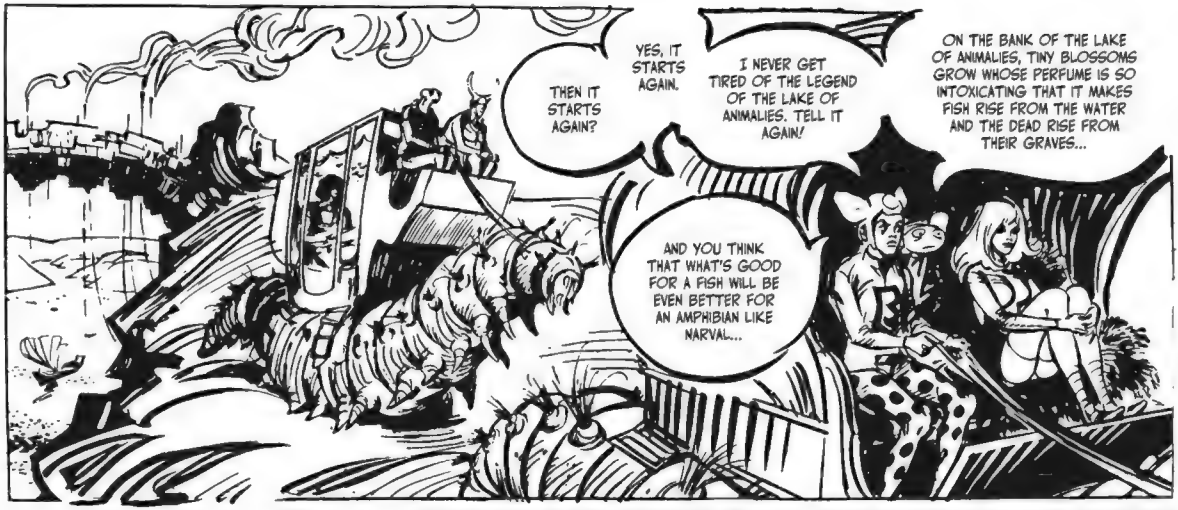
COME ON! GO! GO!
49
FOREST

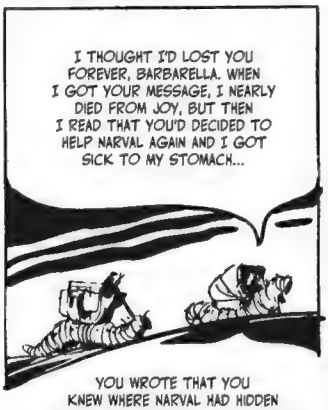
WAS IT YOU THAT SENT THE BLACK CLOTH?
DIDN'T HAVE TO SEND HER, SHE WANTED TO GO! THERE, NOW, NEITHER THE BROTHERHOOD, NOR THE BORDERMEN, WILL LOOK FOR YOU HERE. THIS NAVAL GRAVEYARD IS SAID TO HARBOR EVIL SPIRITS AND THE GREAT UNWASHED.
OR MAYBE GREAT SPIRITS AND THE EVIL UNWASHED!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT!
AND WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT RESCUING BEAUTIFUL STRANGERS?
I USED TO BE A STUDENT, BEFORE I BECAME... DISILLUSIONED.
NOW, HE'S A SMUGGLER!
AND WHAT DO YOU SMUGGLE?
WHO CARES?! THAT'S NOT THE POINT. SMUGGLING IS AN ART FORM... IT'S HOPE, IT'S LIFE!
WE'RE CAREFUL. WE THINK OF EVERYTHING. OF NOTHING. WE WRITE POEMS ABOUT PROSE. WE HAVE TO SMUGGLE SOMETHING UNTIL THE DAY SHOWS...
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN SMUGGLING LATELY?
A FEW MONSTERS... AND A COUPLE OF FOREIGNERS LIKE YOURSELF, IN FACT!
I DO FEEL MONSTROUS...
YOU HAVE BUYERS?
I HAVE CONTACTS WHO KNOW A WEALTHY COLLECTOR - THE HEADMISTRESS OF THE CIRCUS DELIRIUM!
FROM ANOTHER SPACE AND TIME?
EXACTLY! I'VE GOT A RARE PIECE I'M SAVING FOR HER RIGHT NOW. HOPE SHE'LL APPRECIATE IT.
SHOW IT TO ME. I MAY HAVE A LITTLE INSIGHT AS TO WHAT SHE'S AFTER.
THINK I CAN GET GOOD PRICE?
HE'S ALIVE?!
PERFECTLY.
HE'S A FILTHY ANIMAL... AND YES, HE'S WORTH A FORTUNE.
50

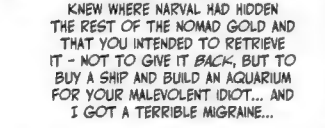
HE'S BREATHING! HIS LUNGS MUST BE FULL OF WATER. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?
I CAN'T EXPLAIN ANYTHING. I FOUND HIM IN AN OLD ROWBOAT, HIS BODY HALF SUBMERGED AND STUCK BETWEEN TWO WOODEN PLANKS. HE LOOKED DEAD TO ME...
...BUT WE'D BARELY GOTTEN HIM OUT OF THE WATER BEFORE HE STARTED SCREAMING LIKE A CRAZY PERSON!
WE HAD TO LET HIM GO!
BUT HE WENT AND PUT HIMSELF BACK IN HARM'S WAY, WAILING THE WHOLE TIME!
I'VE GOT A FRIEND WHO'S WRITING A BOOK ON HIM. I PROMISED NOT TO SELL UNTIL HE'S FINISHED IT.
SHOULD WE TRY TO WAKE HIM?
I'LL DO IT...
ARE YOU NUTS? HE'S DANGEROUS. AND HE DOESN'T EXACTLY WAKE UP IN A GOOD MOOD.
I'M NOT A MORNING PERSON EITHER - ESPECIALLY WHEN I'VE OVERSLEPT...
ANYTHING ELSE I CAN GET YOU?
A MIRROR... I MUST LOOK A FRIGHT. MY FACE IS ALWAYS PUFFY WHEN I WAKE UP...

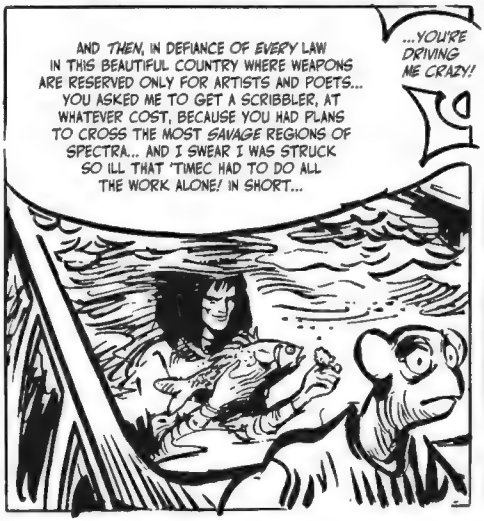
SO LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT: A) YOU HAD LUNGS GRAFTED ONTO YOUR GILLS, B) YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD TO BREATHE AIR, BUT THE FEEL OF IT ON YOUR SKIN HORRIFIED YOU, SO YOU STAYED UNDERWATER...IN A DIVESUIT... OF COURSE, C) I, BARBARELLA, IN ONE OF MY INFAMOUS MOOD SWINGS, CUT YOUR OXYGEN TUBE AND BELIEVED I'D KILLED YOU, D) YOU DIDN'T DIE THOUGH - INSTEAD YOU DISCOVERED YOU COULD BREATHE EITHER AIR OR WATER! IN SHORT, YOU'RE AN AMPHIBIAN NOW!
I HAVE BECOME AN AMPHIBIAN, YES.
THAT'S MARVELOUS!
I DON'T SEE WHAT'S SO MARVELOUS ABOUT IT. I STILL CAN'T BEAR TO GET OUT OF THE WATER.
YOU JUST HAVE TO TALK YOURSELF THROUGH IT.
HE NEEDS A GOOD ENOUGH REASON TO OVERCOME HIS AEROPHOBIA. A VIOLENT SHOCK MIGHT DO THE TRICK...
I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE YOU TO IT. I'VE GOT A FRIEND SWINGING BY AT SIX AND I WANT TO SAY HELLO.
MAY I JOIN YOU? I COULD USE A DRINK.
IS THIS YOUR PLACE?
YES, AND HERE'S MY FRIEND - RIGHT ON TIME!
HOW YA DOIN'?!
HOW YOU DOIN', MY FRIEND?!
52

HOW'S BUSINESS?
BAH! I GAVE UP ARMS TRAFFICKING. TURNS OUT I'M A SLEEPWALKER AND I GOT UP AT NIGHT AND SHOT OFF MY OWN STOCK.
IT'S L'ORTICARIO!
WELL HELLO, BARBARELLA!
BARBA-RELLA?!
CAN'T YOU STAY FOR A BIT?
AFRAID NOT! I HAVE TO FLY. CALL ME!
OH, BARBARELLA! I HAD SOMETHING I WANTED TO TELL YOU, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT!
WAIT, YES I DO! I HAD A DREAM YOU WERE PICKING FLOWERS AT THE EDGE OF A LAKE. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE THERE WAS A SHARP CRY THAT CAME FROM THE WATER. YOU SAID, "SOON THAT FISH WON'T CRY ANYMORE..."
"FOR THIS LAKE IS THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES."
LIO, BEHAVE!
SHE'S WITH L'ORTICARIO!
I FEEL OLD ALL OF A SUDDEN!
THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES... THAT REMINDS ME OF THE STORY THE PHOUILLE SOLDIERS TOLD...
ON THE BANK OF THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES, TINY BLOSSOMS GROW WHOSE PERFUME IS SO INTOXICATING THAT IT MAKES FISH RISE FROM THE WATER AND THE DEAD RISE FROM THEIR GRAVES...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO THE AMPHIBIAN! I HAVE AN IDEA!


THEN IT STARTS AGAIN?
YES, IT STARTS AGAIN.
I NEVER GET TIRED OF THE LEGEND OF THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES. TELL IT AGAIN!
ON THE BANK OF THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES, TINY BLOSSOMS GROW WHOSE PERFUME IS SO INTOXICATING THAT IT MAKES FISH RISE FROM THE WATER AND THE DEAD RISE FROM THEIR GRAVES...
AND YOU THINK THAT WHAT'S GOOD FOR A FISH WILL BE EVEN BETTER FOR AN AMPHIBIAN LIKE NARVAL...


I THOUGHT I'D LOST YOU FOREVER, BARBARELLA. WHEN I GOT YOUR MESSAGE, I NEARLY DIED FROM JOY, BUT THEN I READ THAT YOU'D DECIDED TO HELP NARVAL AGAIN AND I GOT SICK TO MY STOMACH...


YOU WROTE THAT YOU KNEW WHERE NARVAL HAD HIDDEN THE REST OF THE NOMAD GOLD AND THAT YOU INTENDED TO RETRIEVE IT - NOT TO GIVE IT *BACK*, BUT TO BUY A SHIP AND BUILD AN AQUARIUM FOR YOUR MALEVOLENT IDIOT... AND I GOT A TERRIBLE MIGRAINE...

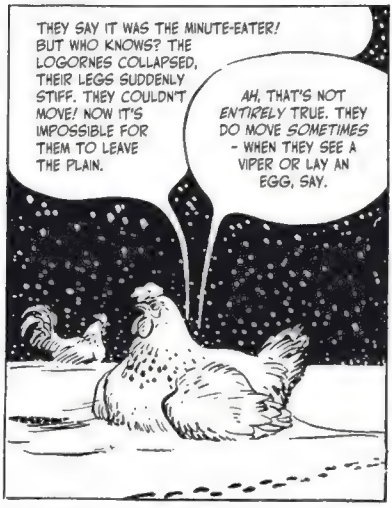

AND *THEN*, IN DEFIANCE OF *EVERY* LAW IN THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY WHERE WEAPONS ARE RESERVED ONLY FOR ARTISTS AND POETS... YOU ASKED ME TO GET A SCRIBBLER, AT WHATEVER COST, BECAUSE YOU HAD PLANS TO CROSS THE MOST *SAVAGE* REGIONS OF SPECTRA... AND I SWEAR I WAS STRUCK SO ILL THAT 'TIMEC HAD TO DO ALL THE WORK ALONE! IN SHORT...
...YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY!

TIME IS OVERLAPPING!

THIS TIME, IT'S TIME ITSELF THAT'S STORMING!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY WE NEED A WEAPON NOW?!
I SHOULD HAVE TESTED THE SCRIBBLER ON THE BORDERMEN! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THE TRIGGER IS!
BILL, JUST FIRE!
THEY'RE RETREATING, BUT NARVAL'S TANK WAS HIT!
HELP!
SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING!
DOES ANYONE KNOW HOW TO SEAL UP A LEAK?
THE ENTIRE FLEET, THE ENTIRE BEAUTIFUL FLEET... LOST FOREVER...
WHAT IS THIS? IT LOOKS LIKE AN EGGSHELL!
NARVAL...YOU MUST BE BRAVE. SEE IF YOU CAN CLIMB IN HERE WITHOUT BREAKING THE SHELL.
55

COME ON NARVAL, AT LEAST GIVE IT A TRY! YOU'LL BE DRY IN A MINUTE ANYWAY.
I'LL NEVER MAKE IT!
THE STORM HAS DISTURBED TIME, AND BROUGHT ON WINTER.
HE SAYS IT'S THE MINUTE-EATER.
I'M GOING TO FREEZE IN MY EGG, DO SOMETHING!
DO SOMETHING YOURSELF! SPLASH AROUND TO KEEP ICE FROM FORMING!
GREAT. IT'S SNOWING! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE IT GETS WORSE.
NOT SO FAST. LOOK AT OUR RIDES!
DAMMIT! THEY COCOONED!
IT WAS THEIR ONLY CHANCE AT SURVIVAL! I'M GOING TO CLIMB THAT HILL AND CALL FOR HELP. MAYBE THERE'S AN OUTPOST CLOSE ENOUGH THAT WE CAN MARCH THERE...
YES! PEOPLE AND...THINGS...
MISTER! WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUTSIDE IN THIS WEATHER? COME, SHELTER YOURSELF!
THANK YOU, KIND SIR! I'LL BE BACK WITH MY FRIENDS...!

NARVAL'S PASSED OUT AND HE'S STARTING TO FREEZE! DO YOU THINK HE'LL DIE?
N-N-NO, I THINK...THE A-A-AQUAMEN H-H-HIBERNATE...
HELLO!
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THERE...! HE MUST BE MISERABLE.
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE A PICK-AXE, OR SOMETHING LIKE IT?
NO, DON'T BREAK THE ICE! WE'LL HAVE TO MELT IT. OUR FRIEND NEEDS WATER TO SURVIVE... IT'S COMPLICATED...
FOLLOW ME. WHEN IT'S THIS COLD, IT'S BEST TO SPEND THE NIGHT UNDER THE WINGS OF A LOGORNE!
WHAT IS THIS REGION CALLED?
THE LOGORÉE... DON'T ASK.
COME INSIDE, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR FRIEND... JUST BE SURE YOU DON'T TIP HIM OVER.
IT'S SO WARM!
GO AHEAD AND DISROBE... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO ADJUST THE TEMPERATURE OF THE LOGORNES OTHERWISE.
HAVE YOU ALWAYS LIVED LIKE THIS?
NOT ALWAYS LIKE THIS, NO.
IT'S BEEN A JOURNEY, ALWAYS A JOURNEY!
20 YEARS AGO, WE WERE NOMADS. THE LOGORNES WERE OUR ESCORTS. THEY OFFERED SHELTER IN BAD WEATHER, AND EGGS - ONE EGG IS ENOUGH TO FEED A FAMILY FOR EIGHT DAYS!
IN TURN, WE GUIDED THEM TO REGIONS WITH AMPLE FOOD...
WHY DID YOU SETTLE IN THIS INHOSPITABLE PLACE?
IT'S THE ANKYLOSIS OF THE LOGORNES! I WAS YOUNG AT THE TIME, BUT I REMEMBER IT WELL THE TRIBE WAS MARCHING ON THE PLAIN AND URGING THE ANIMALS FORWARD WHILE THEY CLUCKED...
YOUR FATHER ASKED WHAT TIME IT WAS, I REMEMBER. NIGHT FELL AND IT STARTED TO SNOW.


THEY SAY IT WAS THE MINUTE-EATER! BUT WHO KNOWS? THE LOGORNES COLLAPSED, THEIR LEGS SUDDENLY STIFF. THEY COULDN'T MOVE! NOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO LEAVE THE PLAIN.
AH, THAT'S NOT *ENTIRELY* TRUE. THEY DO MOVE *SOMETIMES* - WHEN THEY SEE A VIPER OR LAY AN EGG, SAY.

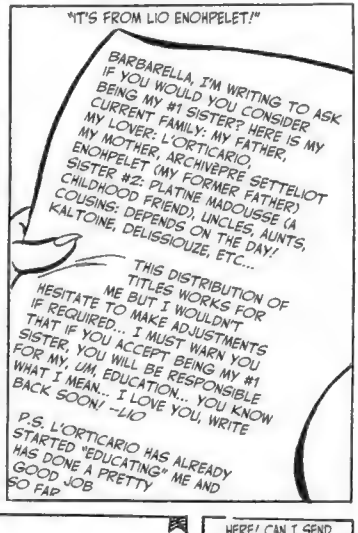
THAT'S TRUE! THEY RID US OF SNAKES!
BUT THEY NEVER HATCH ANY EGGS...! NOT ONE SUCCESSFUL BROOD IN 20 YEARS!
THAT COULD CHANGE!
IT *HAS TO* CHANGE!
DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

SEVERAL! BUT WE MUST DECIDE FOR OURSELVES, ARE WE SEDENTARY OR NOMADIC? DO WE TRY TO EXPAND OUR HABITABLE SPACE? - AT THE COST OF WARMTH, NO DOUBT...
...OR DO WE RENOUNCE THIS WAY OF LIFE, LEAVE THE VALLEY AND ABANDON THE LOGORNES?

MISS, YOUR FRIEND HAS *THAWED*. HE'S ASKING FOR YOU...
I'M COMING!
TOIMP! TOIMP!
I HEAR A HORN! THAT MUST BE THE MAILMAN.

TOIMP
TOIMP

YOU WOULDN'T BE MS. BARBARELLA, BY ANY CHANCE?
I AM! BUT WHO KNOWS I'M HERE?
PROBABLY NO ONE! I'VE LUGGED THIS LETTER AROUND FOR THREE MINUTE-EATER MONTHS, HOPING I'D RUN IN TO YOU.


"IT'S FROM LIO ENOHPELET!"
BARBARELLA, I'M WRITING TO ASK IF YOU WOULD YOU CONSIDER BEING MY #1 SISTER? HERE IS MY CURRENT FAMILY: MY FATHER, MY LOVER: L'ORTICARIO. MY MOTHER, ARCHIVEPRE SETTELIOT ENOHPELET (MY FORMER FATHER) SISTER #2: PLATINE MADOUSSE (A CHILDHOOD FRIEND), UNCLES, AUNTS, COUSINS: DEPENDS ON THE DAY! KALTOINE, DELISSIOUZE, ETC...
THIS DISTRIBUTION OF TITLES WORKS FOR ME BUT I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS IF REQUIRED... I MUST WARN YOU THAT IF YOU ACCEPT BEING MY #1 SISTER, YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY, UM, EDUCATION... YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN... I LOVE YOU, WRITE BACK SOON! -LIO
P.S. L'ORTICARIO HAS ALREADY STARTED "EDUCATING" ME AND HAS DONE A PRETTY GOOD JOB SO FAR

CAN YOU GIVE ME A MOMENT TO WRITE A RESPONSE?
TAKE YOUR TIME.
YOUR AMPHIBIAN IS WHINING FOR YOU AGAIN!

I REFUSE TO TRAVEL IN THIS EGG! WE CAN'T EVEN CHANGE THE WATER. I INSIST YOU SEND SOMEONE TO FETCH *BIG BUG*.
LUCKY YOU, THE MOU MOUNTAINS TO THE NORTH OF THE LOGORÉE ARE RIGHT WHERE YOU ABANDONED THE ASTRONEF - AND THAT'S WHERE I PLAN TO TAKE US.

BUT HOW WILL WE FIND OUR SHIP IN THIS STORM? FIRST THINGS FIRST! LIO'S LETTER... I WONDER HOW LONG THE MAIL WILL TAKE TO GET TO VENTOUSE.

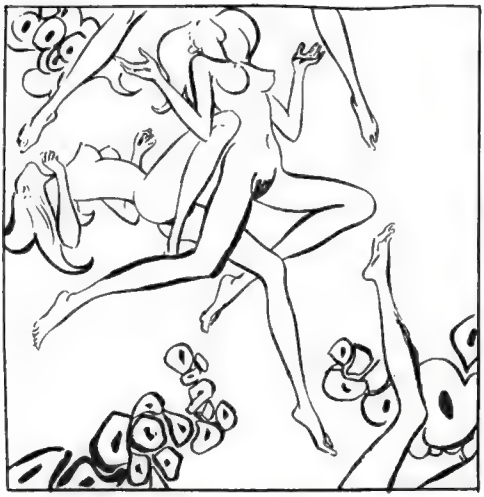
HERE! CAN I SEND SOMETHING CERTIFIED?
WELL... IT STILL WON'T GET THERE UNTIL YESTERDAY. WHAT WITH THE MINUTE-EATER AND ALL...
GOOD ENOUGH!

YET ANOTHER IMPOSSIBLE IRRITATION! HOW DID YOU GET THE ASTRONEF BACK IN UNDER 12 HOURS? THESE TIME TRICKS MAKE ME SICK...
BIG BUG
WHO CARES? WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE LEAVE THIS PLACE... WALK, SWIM, FLY, OR SWINDLE, I DON'T CARE, AS LONG AS WE MOVE ON AND FIND TIME AND SPACE TO LAUGH AGAIN.
UH...?
THE MAILMAN DOESN'T LIKE TO WAIT ON THE STREET. HE FLIRTS WITH THE MINUTE-EATER AND DELIVERS MAIL ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS... I SENT MYSELF AS AN EXPRESS PACKAGE TO MISTERS TARABUSTE AND MECHABOT, C/O BIG BUG ASTRONEF, MOUNT MOU ON THE PLANET SPECTRA...
MOUNT MOU IS LESS THAN A TWO-HOUR HIKE FROM LOGOREE.
IF I HAD A TRIC TRAC TRANSFER ON MY DELIVERY BICYCLE, I WOULD BE ABLE TO DELIVER ALL MY PACKAGES IN THE GAPS BETWEEN DAYS...
MAKE ME AN OFFER...
IF THE MAPS ARE CORRECT, BIG BUG WILL FLY OVER THE LAKE OF ANIMALIES ANY SECOND NOW. ARE YOU READY, NARVAL?
THERE IT IS, THE LAKE! THE SUNS ARE SETTING...
READY, NARVAL?
READY AS I'LL EVER BE. RELEASE ME.
59

NARVAL, CAN YOU HEAR ME? IT'S TIME! THE FLOWERS WILL BLOOM AND THEIR SCENT WILL PROPEL YOU OUT OF THE WATER!
I'M STARTING TO FEEL SOMETHING! AREN'T YOU?
I FEEL... I FEEL... ANNOYED...
NIGHT IS FALLING... I DON'T SEE A SINGLE FLOWER YET... BUT THERE IS SOMETHING IN THE AIR...
!
WHY'S EVERYONE ACTING SO PECULIAR...?
THAT SCENT... THAT STRANGE SCENT...
IT'S... IT'S BEAUTIFUL...
BILL! WHY ISN'T IT AFFECTING YOU?
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, BARBARELLA... AND YOURS IS THE ONLY PERFUME THAT COULD EVER AFFECT ME...
NOT A SINGLE FLOWER BLOOMS AND YET...
60

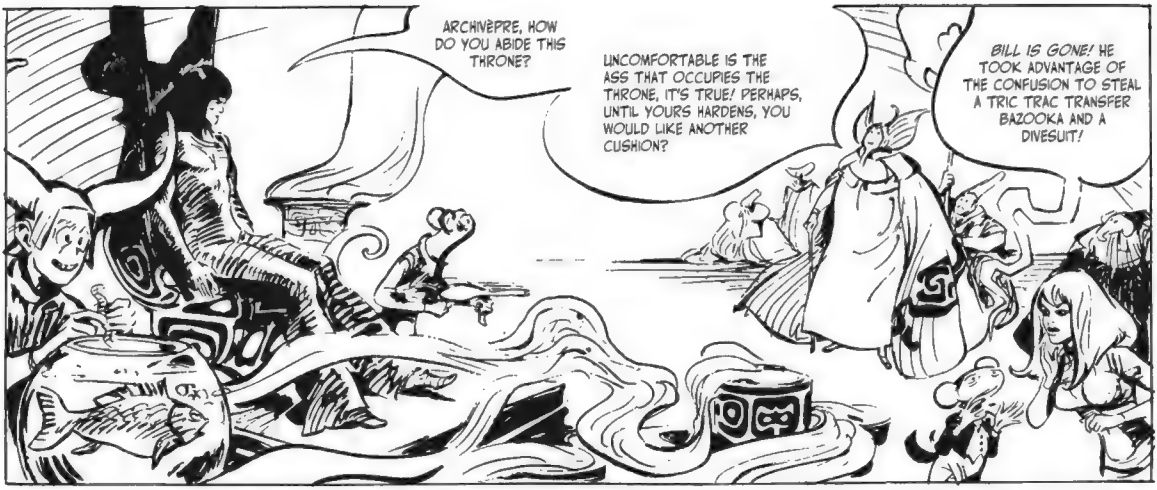
THAT SCENT, IT'S THE ANIMALIES!
I'M GOING TO GET A BETTER LOOK!
NO!
COME...
...AND I AM STILL TOMORROW....
I REMAIN YESTERDAY...

THE HOURGLASS GOD IS LOSING SAND;
GRAINS DROP IN HASTE AND SORROW...
WE BITE OUR LIPS AS HE LOSES BLOOD...
COME...
I REMAIN YESTERDAY...
...AND I AM STILL TOMORROW...
IN OUR HANDS, TIME ALL AT ONCE;
THE MOON IS AS THE SUN,
EVERY THRILL YOU'VE EVER KNOWN,
ALL PLEASURES BECOME ONE...
62



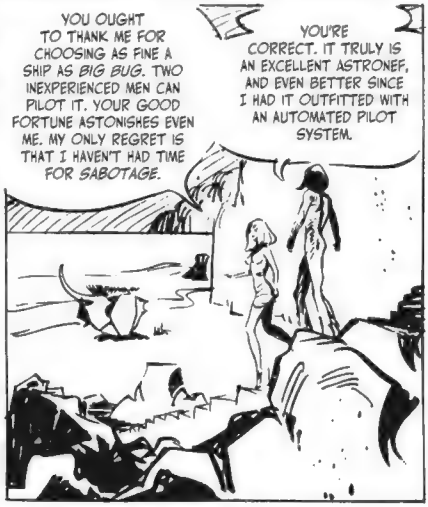
HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?
GOOD. BUT I THINK I DIED SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY.
WELL, WELL, NARVAL... LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF THE AIR ANYMORE...
I'M NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING ANYMORE...
WHERE IS BILL? AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THE SCRIBBLER?
I SUPPOSE I DO OWE YOU AN EXPLANATION...
YOUR FRIENDS FOUGHT WITH HONOR. YOUR MECHABOT, TO THE BITTER END, I'M AFRAID. IF ONLY YOU'D BEEN HERE...
I'M SORRY I WASN'T. I'M SORRY ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS. WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH US?
AM I YOUR PRISONER?
IN A SENSE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
IT'S COMPLICATED. SHALL WE GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING? BACK TO THE ASTRONEF?
WHAT OF IT?
THAT MUTATION I DESIRED – I WANTED IT NOT JUST FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR MY PEOPLE. THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF OUR HOME WORLD, CISTERN IV, IS HELD BACK BY THE FACT THAT AQUAMEN CAN'T LEAVE THE WATER!
64
FROM THE START, MY GOALS WERE TO PREPARE FOR THE INVASION OF SPECTRA AND TO CREATE CONDITIONS FOR THE MASS MUTATION OF OUR AQUAMEN. I STOLE GOLD FROM THE ITALIC NOMADS AND USED IT TO BUY A COMPANY OF MERCENARIES...

WITH THESE MEN, I PLANNED TO INVADE VENTOUSE, SEIZE IT FROM ARCHIVÈPRE SETTELIOT ENOHPELET, AND TURN IT INTO A BASE FOR THE VESSELS ARRIVING FROM CISTERN IV.
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED.
NO! THE SABURE SURGEONS GAVE ME LUNGS TO BREATHE AIR, BUT NOTHING ELSE. I REMAINED POWERLESS AGAINST THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS.
AND YOUR MEN, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR INFIRMITY, DISAPPEARED WITH MOST OF THE ITALIC'S GOLD, DIDN'T THEY?
YES, BUT I STILL HAVE BIG BUG AND ONE CARD LEFT UP MY SLEEVE - THE KLEPTANE FROM THE SOUDAIN PEOPLE. THE SOUDAIN ARE THE ONLY SUPPLIERS OF KLEPTANE, AND WITHOUT IT, THE CITY OF VENTOUSE FALLS TO PIECES! IF I ALONE POSSESS THIS SUBSTANCE - SO RARE THAT IT TAKES A YEAR TO REFINE ONE GRAM - SETTELIOT ENOHPELET WILL HAVE TO DO AS I WISH.
VENTOUSE, AT LAST! PREPARE TO FIRE A WARNING SHOT!
I SWEAR BY THE MINUTE-EATER! TELL THEM TO STOP FIRING THAT INFERNAL CANNON AND CUT THE FUSS. I KNOW THAT HE HAS THE LAST 20 GRAMS OF KLEPTANE ON SPECTRA! I'M READY TO TALK. TELL HIM - QUICKLY!
THE SEMAPHORE, ARCHIVÈPRE! THE SEMAPHORE IS STUCK!
THEY SURRENDER! ALAS, I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THEY PUT UP A FIGHT... THE AIR EXCITES ME AND I CRAVE ACTION...
THERE'S SOMETHING I DON'T UNDERSTAND... THE AQUAMEN DON'T HAVE SPACESHIPS, THEY'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO BUILD THEM.
THEY'LL HAVE YOURS, BARBARELLA. ADAPTED INTO AN ASTRONEF-CISTERN, BIG BUG CAN CARRY MORE THAN A THOUSAND AQUAMEN AT ONCE.
BUT THE VOYAGE IS LONG AND CONSIDERABLY DIFFICULT... YOU'D NEED AT LEAST 10 YEARS TO GET THEM ALL HERE.
AH HA HA HA! 20, IN FACT! 20 YEARS OF GALAXY TIME, BUT ON SPECTRA... ONLY ONE WEEK!
PREPARE TO DROP THE MAGNETIC ANCHORS!
SIR, BEFORE YOU EXPRESS YOUR DEMANDS, I WISH TO WARN YOU, ONE DOES NOT KNOW VICTORY WITHOUT ITS LIMITATIONS. TAKE MY THRONE, MY TITLE, MY LIFE... BUT I MAY RENOUNCE ONLY THOSE. MY SPIRITUAL CHARGE DOES NOT BELONG TO ME; THAT IS IN THE MAW OF THE MINUTE-EATER, HE WHO TIMES HIS TANTRUMS FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF OUR SOULS - AND OUR CLOCKS!
AT THE MOMENT, MY ONLY DESIRE IS TO TAKE A BATH... AND THAT YOU STOP BREATHING SO HEAVILY! YOU'RE CAUSING A DRAFT.
65

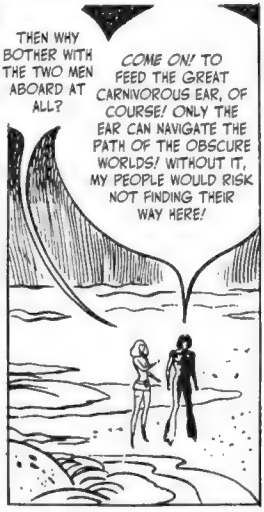

ARCHIVEPRE, HOW DO YOU ABIDE THIS THRONE?
UNCOMFORTABLE IS THE ASS THAT OCCUPIES THE THRONE, IT'S TRUE! PERHAPS, UNTIL YOURS HARDENS, YOU WOULD LIKE ANOTHER CUSHION?
BILL IS GONE! HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE CONFUSION TO STEAL A TRIC TRAC TRANSFER BAZOOKA AND A DIVESUIT!

KEEP YOUR CUSHIONS AND REGAIN YOUR POSITION! THE AIR IS TOO DRY IN THIS ROOM... I WANT YOU TO BUILD ME A VILLA ON THE SEASHORE. BEGIN IT NOW. I'LL EXPECT TO MOVE IN BY MORNING!

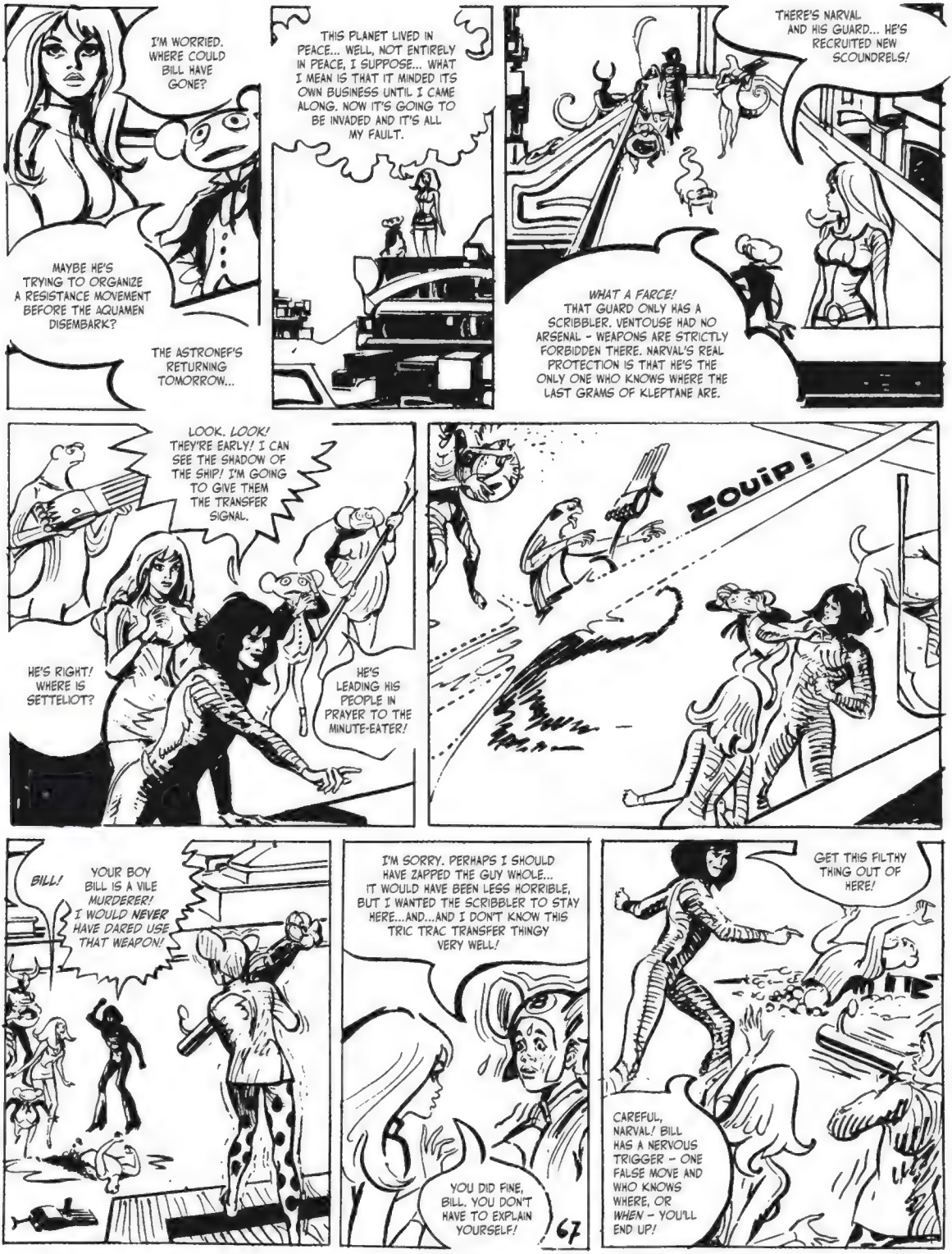
I WILL IF I CHOOSE!
WHILE WE'RE WAITING, I'M GOING TO GIVE MY MEN THEIR FINAL ORDERS... BIG BUG MUST LEAVE FOR CISTERN IV TONIGHT. THERE ARE ALREADY EIGHT GENERATIONS WAITING TO GREET THE NEW ME. COME, BARBARELLA!


YOU OUGHT TO THANK ME FOR CHOOSING AS FINE A SHIP AS BIG BUG. TWO INEXPERIENCED MEN CAN PILOT IT. YOUR GOOD FORTUNE ASTONISHES EVEN ME. MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I HAVEN'T HAD TIME FOR SABOTAGE.
YOU'RE CORRECT. IT TRULY IS AN EXCELLENT ASTRONEF, AND EVEN BETTER SINCE I HAD IT OUTFITTED WITH AN AUTOMATED PILOT SYSTEM.

IN A QUARTER OF AN HOUR, BIG BUG WILL TAKE OFF WITHOUT REQUIRING A HUMAN TO SO MUCH AS TOUCH A BUTTON. AND WHEN IT REACHES ITS DESTINATION, A RECORDED RADIO MESSAGE WILL PROVIDE MY AQUAMEN WITH ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS THEY NEED.


THEN WHY BOTHER WITH THE TWO MEN ABOARD AT ALL?
COME ON! TO FEED THE GREAT CARNIVOROUS EAR, OF COURSE! ONLY THE EAR CAN NAVIGATE THE PATH OF THE OBSCURE WORLDS! WITHOUT IT, MY PEOPLE WOULD RISK NOT FINDING THEIR WAY HERE!

YOU THINK THAT THOSE TWO CLOWNS WILL COME BACK WITH YOUR PEOPLE IN TWENTY YEARS...?!
OBVIOUSLY NOT! ONCE THEY ARRIVE ON CISTERN IV, THEY'RE FREE TO GO TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE PLANET OF THEIR CHOICE WITH THE FORTUNE IN THEIR POCKETS...! I DON'T WANT TO SPEAK OF THIS ANY FURTHER. LET'S HAVE A SWIM.


I'M WORRIED. WHERE COULD BILL HAVE GONE?
MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO ORGANIZE A RESISTANCE MOVEMENT BEFORE THE AQUAMEN DISEMBARK?
THE ASTRONEF'S RETURNING TOMORROW...
THIS PLANET LIVED IN PEACE... WELL, NOT ENTIRELY IN PEACE, I SUPPOSE... WHAT I MEAN IS THAT IT MINDED ITS OWN BUSINESS UNTIL I CAME ALONG. NOW IT'S GOING TO BE INVADED AND IT'S ALL MY FAULT.
THERE'S NARVAL AND HIS GUARD... HE'S RECRUITED NEW SCOUNDRELS!
WHAT A FARCE! THAT GUARD ONLY HAS A SCRIBBLER. VENTOUSE HAD NO ARSENAL - WEAPONS ARE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN THERE. NARVAL'S REAL PROTECTION IS THAT HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS WHERE THE LAST GRAMS OF KLEPTANE ARE.
LOOK. LOOK! THEY'RE EARLY! I CAN SEE THE SHADOW OF THE SHIP! I'M GOING TO GIVE THEM THE TRANSFER SIGNAL.
HE'S RIGHT! WHERE IS SETTELIOT?
HE'S LEADING HIS PEOPLE IN PRAYER TO THE MINUTE-EATER!
ZOUIP!
BILL!
YOUR BOY BILL IS A VILE MURDERER! I WOULD NEVER HAVE DARED USE THAT WEAPON!
I'M SORRY. PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE ZAPPED THE GUY WHOLE... IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS HORRIBLE, BUT I WANTED THE SCRIBBLER TO STAY HERE...AND...AND I DON'T KNOW THIS TRIC TRAC TRANSFER THINGY VERY WELL!
YOU DID FINE, BILL. YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF!
GET THIS FILTHY THING OUT OF HERE!
CAREFUL, NARVAL! BILL HAS A NERVOUS TRIGGER - ONE FALSE MOVE AND WHO KNOWS WHERE, OR WHEN - YOU'LL END UP!

HAND OVER YOUR WEAPON, OR YOU WILL NEVER KNOW WHERE TO FIND THE KLEPTANE!
LOOK, MORE PEOPLE!
LIO! L'ORTICARIO!
MY CHILDREN, MY CHILDREN... WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HERE IN VENTOUSE GUNS ARE EXPRESSLY FORBIDDEN!
THERE, THERE, NARVAL... A DEFEATED CONQUEROR IS STILL A CONQUEROR!
I HAVE NOT BEEN DEFEATED! ANY MOMENT NOW, BIG BUG WILL PASS INTO SPECTRA TIME, A THOUSAND AQUAMEN WILL DESCEND ON VENTOUSE AND THERE WILL BE A RAIN OF IRON, FIRE, STEEL, AND BLOOD!
WHILE WE'RE WAITING, WHY NOT TELL ME WHERE THE TWENTY GRAMS OF KLEPTANE ARE? MY DAUGHTER IS CRAZY AND RECKLESS, SHE MIGHT JUST SHOOT.
YOU'RE BAD.
NO, YOU'RE BAD.
I WOULDN'T GIVE YOU THE KLEPTANE IF I HAD IT – WHICH I DON'T – BECAUSE MY FISH ATE IT!
"TIMEC SAID YOU TOOK A TRANSFER BAZOOKA AND A DIVESUIT...?
YES, IT'S IN A CAVE ON THE OCEANFRONT.
GIVE ME THAT FISHBOWL IMMEDIATELY!
IT'S A DESPERATE MOVE, BUT WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. HOLD IT STEADY, BILL... YOU'RE TRANSFERRING A BUBBLE OF SPACE. THAT SHOULD CUSHION MY ARRIVAL! TO BRING ME BACK, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE THE SPATIO-TEMPORAL RADAR AS A VIEWFINDER!
WHATEVER YOU SAY!
68

THAT WAS CLOSE!
IT'S JUST AS NARVAL SAID. THE AQUAMEN HAVE TRANSFORMED BIG BUG INTO A GIANT AQUARIUM AND THEY'RE ALL TAKING IT EASY INSIDE...
I DON'T WANT TO HURT THEM, BUT I HAVE TO KEEP THEM FROM PASSING INTO SPECTRA'S SPACE-TIME, WHATEVER THE COST!
I'VE DONE QUITE A NUMBER ON THE STABILIUM GRATES! HOPEFULLY THEY'LL JUST GIVE UP...
INSIDE THE ASTRONEF.
STILL NOTHING FROM NARVAL... HE MUST BE IN TROUBLE. WE CAN'T WAIT FOR HIS SIGNAL FOREVER...
GREAT RORQUAL, THE SHIP IS READY TO PASS INTO THE SPACE-TIME ON THIS PLANET... I'VE VERIFIED ALL OF THE TRANSFER PROTOCOLS.
PREPARE FOR TRANSFER!
AT YOUR COMMAND!
GREAT RORQUAL, WHAT IS THIS ASTRONEF? IT'S COMING STRAIGHT AT US!
IT LOOKS LIKE OURS – BUT THE STABILIUM GRATES ARE DESTROYED.
HMM. IT'S LIKE A WARPED REFLECTION OF OUR SHIP...!

I THINK I MANAGED TO BREAK SOMETHING...
BILL, CAN YOU HEAR ME?! NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO PULL ME OUT!
EASIER SAID THAN DONE! THERE, I'VE SPOTTED YOU, JUST DON'T MOVE!
A SPATIO-TEMPORAL STORM, GREAT RORQUAL! SHOULD WE STOP THE TRANSFER?
NO! WE MUST COMPLETE THE TRANSFER AT ALL COSTS!
BARBARELLA!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, WOMAN?! THE MINUTE-EATER HAS NEVER BEEN THIS ANGRY!
LOOK, IT'S INCREDIBLE!
THEY COMPLETED THE TRANSFER...
BUT BIG BUG IS IN BAD SHAPE!

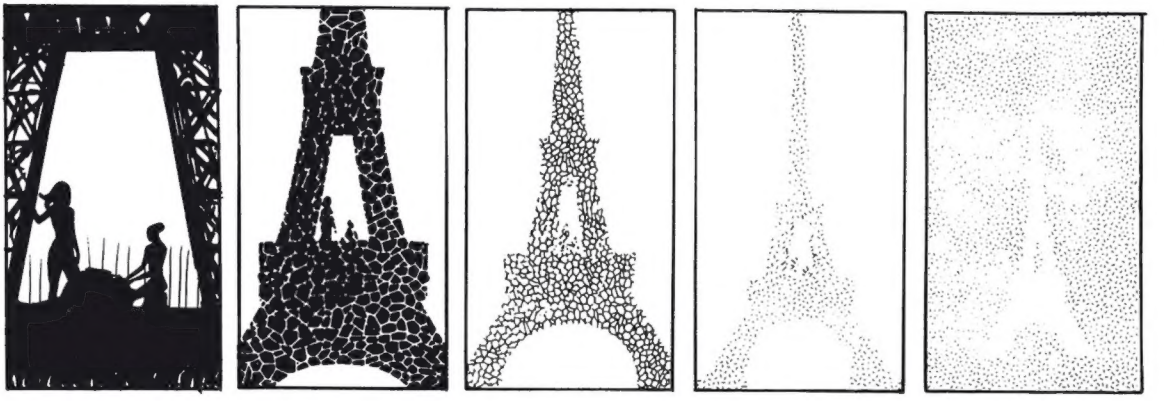
BUG
THEY TRANSFERRED... BUT THEY DIDN'T LAND WHERE THEY'D HOPED. THE MINUTE-EATER'S FURY IS CAPRICIOUS AND CRUEL.
YOU WON, BARBARELLA!
BARBARELLA DESTROYED THE STABILIUM GRATES THAT REINFORCED THE SPACE-TIME BUBBLE AROUND THE ASTRONEF. THE BUBBLE BURST BEFORE THE SHIP WAS COMPLETELY REMATERIALIZED IN SPECTRA'S TIME AND THE AQUAMEN UNDERWENT A MOLECULAR SLOWING DOWN THAT LITERALLY FROZE THEM IN THE WATER.
NO! NO! NO!
I DID THAT?
A THOUSAND MEN...FROZEN ON A WARM DAY – BY MY HAND!
MY HEAD IS ON FIRE! OH, MY SKIN IS SCALES! I'M BURNING! I'M BURNING!
71

NARVAL, ARE YOU ILL?
LEAVE ME ALONE!
IT IS AWFULLY HOT...
BARBARELLA, COME! THE ICE IS MELTING! ONE OF THE AQUAMAN IS COMING LOOSE...
DID HE MOVE? IT LOOKED TO ME LIKE HE MOVED!
HE DID MOVE!
NARVAL SURVIVED AFTER HAVING BEEN FROZEN IN THE LOGORNE EGG, REMEMBER? THE AQUAMEN HIBERNATE IN COLD TEMPERATURES!
THEN WE MUST BREAK THE ICE INTO CUBES AND THROW THEM INTO THE SEA!
THESE MEN DON'T HAVE LUNGS. IF THEY'RE TO STAND ANY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL, THEY'LL NEED TO BE IN THEIR ELEMENT.
HEADS UP, BELOW!
NARVAL, YOU'RE A SCOUNDREL, BUT I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU. YOU AND YOUR MEN WILL SURVIVE.
I DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING ANYMORE. IT'S ALL FOR NAUGHT!
BARBARELLA!
ONE OF THEM IS REVIVING AND HE WANTS TO TALK. CAN YOU INTERPRET?

WHAT'S HE SAYING?
SCHBLUB!
THE WATER IS TOO COLD WITH ALL THIS ICE!
BRING US A DIVESUIT! THAT SHOULD MAKE CONVERSATION EASIER.
WELL?
I DON'T KNOW YOU, BUT I GATHER YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO PREVENT OUR TRANSFER... PLEASE UNDERSTAND, WE COME IN *PEACE*. SEARCH OUR VESSEL. YOU WILL FIND NO WEAPONS – ONLY OFFERINGS FOR YOUR KING!
I DON'T KNOW YOU EITHER, BUT I KNOW ONE OF YOUR KIND AND I'VE LEARNED THE *HARD WAY* THAT HE'S NOT TO BE TRUSTED.
YES. OUR FATHERS WARNED US, HE IS A *WICKED BEING*, INDEED.
THEN WHY WAS HE CHOSEN FOR SUCH A VITAL MISSION?
PRECISELY *BECAUSE* WE KNEW HIM TO POSSESS A CUNNING AND EFFICACY LACKING IN MOST AQUAMEN. WITH HIS DEARTH OF SCRUPLES, HE HAD A BETTER CHANCE THAN OTHERS OF ACHIEVING OUR GOALS. MADAME, WE HAD NO WAY OFF OUR WORLD...
WE'D LIVED FOR GENERATIONS UNDER THE COLONIAL SUPERVISION OF ALTARANTE, A NEIGHBORING PLANET. WE NEEDED TO TAKE SMALL STEPS... THE FIRST WAS TO SEND ONE OF US ACROSS THE GALAXY IN SEARCH OF A WAY TO ESCAPE...
NARVAL SUCCEEDED WHERE OTHERS LESS FORMIDABLE FAILED... BUT NOW HIS ROLE IS COMING TO AN END. WE WISH TO LIVE ON GOOD TERMS WITH THE INHABITANTS OF SPECTRA... THUS OUR COUNCIL HAS VOTED TO *EXECUTE* NARVAL.
YOU'VE CONDEMNED HIM TO DEATH?
AS A SIGN OF GOODWILL AND IN THE SPIRIT OF MORAL ATONEMENT.

I DON'T HAVE MORALS, BUT I HAVE *PRINCIPLES!* NARVAL IS UNDER MY PROTECTION AND SO HE SHALL STAY! IT'S TRUE HE'S A SCOUNDREL, BUT HE'S A LIVING BEING AND CAPABLE OF ANYTHING! HE MIGHT EVEN DO *GOOD* ONE DAY! I'D LIKE TO THINK SO, ANYWAY.
BILL, ASK SETTELIOT TO PREPARE A COMFORTABLE AQUARIUM FOR NARVAL. HE'S MY PERSONAL PRISONER.
BILL...? WHAT ARE YOU UP TO? WHO IS THAT?
AN *AQUAWOMAN!* SHE'S...SHE'S NICE, Y'KNOW!
BLOODY BILL!
HEY, L'ORTICARIO, WHAT'S THE RUSH?!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF PLAYING WITH PISTOLS. I'M GOING TO TRY AND START A BUSINESS WITH THE AQUAMEN.
I INVENTED A MACHINE THAT *SWEETENS* SEAWATER!
CONGRAT-ULATIONS!
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
NO REASON.
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN *LOVE*, BARBARELLA?
I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE... IT SEEMS TO ME THAT EACH OF US IS A QUESTION THAT BEGS AN ANSWER...AND THE ANSWER IS *LOVE*. I GUESS I MUST BE A DIFFICULT QUESTION. MY QUESTION GOES UNANSWERED...
I THINK I LOVED SOMEONE ON EARTH... WITH THE GAP IN TIME BETWEEN SPECTRA AND THE REST OF THE GALAXY, HE MUST'VE BEEN *DEAD* FOR ALMOST *500 YEARS* NOW. EVEN IF *BIG BUG* WERE REPARABLE AND I COULD RETURN, I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE ANYTHING. NOW I REALLY *AM* FROM ANOTHER SPACE AND TIME.
AH! THERE YOU ARE! HURRY BACK TO VENTOUSE - THE ARCHIVÊPRE JUST TOOK EXTRAORDINARY SECURITY MEASURES! HE'S DECLARED A CURFEW AND THE POLICE ARE SURROUNDING THE LANDING AREA.
BECAUSE OF THE AQUAMEN? *THAT'S RIDICULOUS!*
NO, I THINK HE'S EXPECTING THE ARRIVAL OF A *VOYAGER*...

WE'RE WAITING FOR A TIME TRAVELER!
EVEN THOUGH THE MACHINE THAT WOULD ALLOW ONE TO MANEUVER FREELY THROUGH TIME WOULDN'T BE DEVELOPED FOR ANOTHER THOUSAND GALAXY YEARS, WE'VE HAD A FEW VISITORS TO SPECTRA BEFORE YOU, BARBARELLA. IT SEEMS A PROTOTYPE WAS CONCEIVED ON YOUR PLANET LONG AGO... ITS INVENTOR SIMPLY DIDN'T THINK IT WISE TO REVEAL THE SECRET TO HIS CONTEMPORARIES.
WHY ALL THE SECURITY MEASURES?
BECAUSE THIS VOYAGER HAS A BAD REPUTATION! FORTUNATELY HE WON'T STAY IN VENTOUSE. HE'S FORBIDDEN TO STAY IN ONE SPACE AND TIME AND IS CONDEMNED TO PERPETUAL TRANSIT.
HERE HE IS!
HER!
WELL, WELL, MY PRETTY. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH YOUR CIRCUS? LOST IT TO THE DEPTHS OF THE AGES, LIKE THE FACES OF YOUR LOVERS?
THE BLACK QUEEN OF SOGO!
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO FIND IT? RIDE ALONG ON MY NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY FOR A BIT?
I THOUGHT I WAS IN CHECKMATE, BUT I STILL HAD THE QUEEN AND THE TOWER...
DON'T BE MAD, FRIENDS, BUT I THINK I'M GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS CHRONOBUS TO GO HOME. REST ASSURED, MY TASTE FOR THE PARADOXICAL DOESN'T GO SO FAR AS TO TICKLE THE MINUTE-EATER UNDER THE ARMS: I WILL DISEMBARK ON EARTH WELL AFTER OUR DEPARTURE IN THE GOOD BIG BUG, AND THEN, IF YOU ALL WANT ME TO, I'LL COME AND GET YOU. DON'T FORGET, EVEN IF I DAWDLE ALONG THE WAY, I CAN BE ON SPECTRA AS SOON AS TOMORROW – OR EVEN YESTERDAY – BUT THAT WOULDN'T BE WISE.



AS FOR THE TWENTY GRAMS OF KLEPTANE: THE PRECIOUS SUBSTANCE CIRCULATES IN THE FLESH OF NARVAL'S FISH, WHO DEVOURED IT. THE SITUATION WOULD HAVE BEEN DIRE FOR VENTOUSE IF THE MINUTE-EATER HADN'T INSPIRED SETTELIOT ENOHPELET. THE ARCHIVÈPRE PLUGGED THE DEVICE THAT ENSURES THE CITY'S COHESION INTO AN AQUARIUM WHERE THE FISH, WHETHER IT LIKES IT OR NOT, NOW RADIATES MAGNETIC FLUID AND PREVENTS VENTOUSE FROM SCATTERING TO THE FOUR WINDS.
NARVAL IS EVIDENTLY HEARTBROKEN WITHOUT HIS FISH...
BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO? IS IT REALLY
ALL THAT IMPORTANT
IN THE END?